

A Message from a Muslim to a Catholic Priest

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May the mercy of Allah be upon him

Revised by

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**In the
Name
of
Allah
the
Most
Gracio
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ul**

Dedication

With complete submission and love, I
acknowledge Your help O Allah.

Without Your guidance, this humble work would not have become a reality. If it is worth dedicating, please bless it with Your acceptance and guide anyone who reads it to the right path which leads to you O Allah.

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Foreword

This humble work is the result of a dialogue between me and Father John, a European Catholic priest. During my travels to different countries, I have often noticed

widespread ignorance of Islam, especially among European Christians. Therefore, I seized every opportunity to explain to them what Islam is. My wife was a Catholic, but with the help of Allah, the Almighty, she found the truth and embraced Islam in 1982.

As I was attending the funeral ceremony of my father-in-law, I had the chance to talk to the Parish priest who got very fascinated when he heard my explanation of some facts about Islam. Shortly afterwards, I decided to include that dialogue in a small book. Nevertheless, I did not intend to tackle the points raised in the dialogue in detail. The idea behind the book is to clarify some major points about Islam in order to enlighten those who have poor knowledge of Islam or have misconceptions about it.

I present this work with love to anyone striving to know the truth about Islam. O' Allah I have completed this work seeking your mercy and forgiveness. I believe that You are the only true God who deserves to be worshipped. O' Allah grant your blessings upon me and all my brothers and sisters in Islam.

Preface

Dear Father John,

(Assalaamu Alaikum).

I have intentionally addressed you at the opening of my letter with a transliteration of an Arabic phrase that Muslims use to greet each other. It means - peace be upon you.

I would like to thank you for everything you have done. Talking to you was great pleasure as you were open-minded. What encouraged me to continue the dialogue with you is your interest to know Islam, Saudi Arabia and Arabic. I do not blame you for not knowing much about our religion and culture due to the unjust and negative propaganda by the Western media as much of it is owned and controlled by Zionism.

In this brief book, I will try to shed light on the main issues of our religion that directly affect and regulate our way of life. I tried my best to present these issues in general, avoiding going into details, as it will take more time.

1. Belief in the Oneness of Allah

Muslims believe in one god, the only true and one god that deserves to be worshipped. Nothing is associated with Him in worship: no son, no daughter, no wife, or any partner of any kind. Our god is Allah, the Creator of the entire universe. 'Allah' is one of the 99 names of His Beautiful Names. Moreover, in Arabic, the word 'Allah' is always singular and has no plural and it is the most common name for our Lord in Arabic. The testimony of Islam states that **"There is no deity truly worshiped except Allah alone, and Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, is His servant and messenger.** The exact words of the first part of this testimony in Arabic is ***"La Ilaha Illa Allah (There is no deity truly worshiped except Allah alone)***

In fact, this statement negates the existence of any other deity besides Allah and it confirms that Allah is the only true God Who is alone worthy of being worshipped. It rejects any association of partners with Allah in worship (which is called *shirk*), and it requires full disbelief in any being or thing that is worshipped besides Allah, be it a human being, an animal, an idol, a star or anything else. All acts of

worship such as prayers, invocation and reliance must be directed to Allah alone. The Holy Quran states that: **“Although they were commanded only to worship Allah with sincere devotion to Him, being inclined to true faith, and to establish prayer and give zakah; that is the true religion.”** (Al-Bayyinah: 5)

Those who sincerely worship Allah, following the dictates of the testimony of faith, will certainly lead a happy life as it is only by worshipping Allah alone that hearts find peace, tranquility and real satisfaction. Allah also says in the Holy Quran: **“Whoever does righteous deeds, male or female, while being a believer, We will surely grant him a good life, and We will surely reward them according to the best of their deeds.”** (An-Nahl: 97).

Moreover, the Holy Quran states that **“Whoever invokes another god besides Allah, for which he has no proof, his reckoning will be with his Lord. Indeed, the disbelievers will never succeed.”** (Al- Mu’minūn: 117). In another ayah, Allah says: **“There is no compulsion in religion; the truth has been made distinct from falsehood. Whoever rejects Tāghoot [false gods] and believes in Allah, has indeed grasped the strong handhold that never breaks. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.”** (Al-Baqarah: 256)

The meaning of the second part of the testimony: “Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah”

Allah has sent Muhammad, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, as a messenger to people of all races, classes and colors; and He made it everybody’s duty to obey him as the Holy Quran states, **“Say [O Prophet], “O people, I am the Messenger of Allah to you all. To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and earth; none has the right to be worshiped except Him; He gives life and causes death.” So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him, so that you may be guided.”** (Al-A’raf:158) The Holy Quran was revealed to Him. Allah sent down to him the greatest of His divine scriptures, the Holy Quran, which **“No falsehood can approach it from the front or from behind; a revelation from the One Who is All-Wise, Praiseworthy”** (Fussilat: 42). He was the Seal of the Prophets and the final prophet sent by the Almighty Allah; therefore, there will be no prophet after him, as evidenced by the ayah in the Holy Quran: **“Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophets. And Allah is All-Knowing of everything.”** (Al-Ahzab: 40)

Belief that Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, is Allah's messenger entails believing in all the statements he made about everything. This includes the following:

- Matters relating to the unseen world, such as the Last Day, the eternal bliss in Paradise and the everlasting punishment in Hellfire
- The events that will take place on the Day of Judgment
- Stories of past nations and what happened between the prophets and their people

It also entails doing the acts he enjoined and avoid the acts he prohibited. This includes the following:

- To comply with his orders, fully convinced that he did not speak of his own desire and that what he came with was nothing but a revelation revealed to him, as the Holy Quran states, **"Whoever obeys the Messenger has indeed obeyed Allah. But anyone who turns away, We have not sent you [O Prophet] as a keeper over them."** (Al-Nisa': 80)
- To avoid the acts he prohibited, such as erroneous practices and bad manners, fully convinced that he only prohibited us from doing so due to divine wisdom and for our own benefit even if we may not be sometimes aware of such benefit.

- To be certain beyond any doubt that doing the acts he enjoined and avoiding the acts he prohibited will benefit us greatly and bring us happiness in this life and in the hereafter, as the Holy Quran states, **“And obey Allah and the Messenger, so that you may be given mercy.”** (Al-Imran:132)
- To firmly believe that those who disobey Allah’s Messenger will suffer a grievous punishment, as the Holy Quran states, **“Do not consider the Messenger’s summons to you as your summons to one another. Allah surely knows those of you who slip away hiding behind others. So let those who disobey his command beware lest some trial may afflict them or they may be afflicted with a painful punishment.”** (An-Noor: 63)

The testimony also entails worshipping Allah in accordance with the Prophet’s instructions. This implies the following:

- To follow his example: We ought to follow the Prophet’s Sunnah, or practice, including his words, deeds and tacit approval, in all aspects of our lives. The Holy Quran states, **“Say, “If you love Allah then follow me; Allah will love you and forgive you your sins: for Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”** (Al Imran: 31)

- Islam is complete: Allah's Messenger, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, conveyed Islam and all its laws in full; thus, no one is allowed to introduce any practice in Islam which the Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, did not approve.
- Islam is relevant to all times and places: Islamic rulings mentioned in the Holy Quran and the Prophet's Sunnah are relevant to all times and places, for no one knows for certain what is best for people except Allah who created them in the first place.
- To follow the Prophet's Sunnah: For one's good deeds and devotional acts to be accepted by Allah, they have to be done in accordance with the manner prescribed by the Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, as the Holy Quran states, **"Say, "I am only a man like you; it has been revealed to me that your God is One God. So whoever hopes for the meeting with his Lord, let him do righteous deeds and associate none in the worship of his Lord."** (Al-Kahf: 110). Innovations in religious matters are strictly forbidden: Those who introduce an innovation in religion (an act of worship which contradicts the Prophet's Sunnah), such as offering a prayer not sanctioned by the Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, blatantly go against his command and will have the innovation they have

introduced rejected, as the Holy Quran states, **“Do not consider the Messenger’s summons to you as your summons to one another. Allah surely knows those of you who slip away hiding behind others. So let those who disobey his command beware lest some trial may afflict them or they may be afflicted with a painful punishment.”** (An-Noor: 63) The Prophet, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, also said in this connection, **“He who innovates something in this religion of ours that is not of it will have it rejected.”** (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

2. Belief in Prophet Muhammad, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him

Muslims believe that Muhammad, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, is the last prophet and messenger of Allah to all mankind. Also, Muslims believe in all the messengers and prophets of Allah from Adam to Noah to Idris (Biblical name Enoch) until the last Prophet Muhammad, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon them all. This includes the belief in Jesus, Moses, Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon and the rest of messengers, peace be upon them all.

Moreover, one of the six Pillars of Faith in Islam is to believe in all the prophets. For example, if a Muslim claims

that Jesus was not a prophet, this will render him/her to be out of the bounds of Islam. Muslims firmly believe that all the prophets were sent to their own people or nations at certain periods of time throughout history except Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, who was sent to all the humanity and whose message is the most comprehensive and the most appropriate to the entire globe and is relevant to all times. Allah, the Almighty, says, **"The Messenger believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, as do the believers. All of them believe in Allah, His angels, His Books, and His messengers, [saying], "We make no distinction between any of His messengers." And they say, "We hear and obey. Grant us Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the [final] destination."** (Al-Baqarah)

In your Gospel, you will find a story of the Canaanite Woman, who was running after Jesus, peace be upon him, when he was walking with his disciples. She was trying to learn from him, but he did not listen to her. His disciples urged him to answer the woman but Jesus said, "No, I am only sent to the lost sheep of the children of Israel. However, these are not the exact words of this story as mentioned in the Gospel, but they clearly show that Jesus was sent to the Jews only to complete the message of Moses and was not sent to all of mankind.

On the contrary, we must believe in the universality of the message of Prophet Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, as it is confirmed in his Hadith, **"I have been given five things which were not given to any amongst the Prophets before me. These are: -1. Allah made me victorious by awe (by His frightening my enemies) for a distance of one month's journey. -2. The earth has been made for me (and for my followers) a place for praying and a thing to perform dry ablution (*Tayammum*). Therefore my followers can pray wherever the time of a prayer is due. -3. The booty has been made lawful for me (and was not made so for anyone else). -4. Every Prophet used to be sent to his nation exclusively but I have been sent to all mankind. -5. I have been given the right of intercession (on the Day of Resurrection.)"** (Al-Bukhari)

This also implies that the prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, was sent from Allah as a mercy to the universe. Allah, Exalted be He, says: **"We have not sent you [O Prophet] except as a mercy to the worlds."** (Al-Anbiya': 107). This qualifies the entire mission as a mercy intended to all people. The context is also important since this declaration came to us in the general context of calling to Islam, to wholehearted submission to Allah, to pure monotheism, and to righteous acts of sincere worship before the coming of the promised Day of Resurrection.

3.Trinity vs Monotheism

For Muslims, the monotheism that is foundational to Islamic doctrine is known not only from Quranic revelation

but also from reason. Islamic rejection of the Christian doctrine of the trinity then flows from the conviction that this doctrine compromises God's unity and entails polytheism. They wrongly give Jesus the son and the Holy Spirit a share in God's exclusive rule of the world, and they devote worship to Jesus that is due only to Allah. Muslims reject Trinity as it violates Allah's unity in a number of ways. These ways involve the Quranic explicit rejection of trinity, Trinitarian doctrinal development as corruption of the message of Jesus, and rational deficiencies in the classical Trinitarian formulations.

The Holy Quran includes several Ayat that clearly state the position of Jesus and his mother Mary as humans. Allah, the Almighty says, addressing Jesus, **"When Allah will say, 'O Jesus, son of Mary, did you tell people, 'Take me and my mother as gods besides Allah?' He will say, 'Glory be to You! It is not for me to say what I have no right. Had I said so, You would have surely known it. You know what is within myself, whereas I do not know what is within Yourself. Indeed, You are the All-Knower of all unseen.'"** (Al- Mā'idah: 116) The Holy Quran also denies that Jesus is the son of Allah and that God is "three." Allah, the Almighty, says, **"O People of the Book, do not go to extremes in your religion, and do not say about Allah but the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah, and His**

Word that He bestowed upon Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers and do not say “Three” [Trinity]. Cease; that is better for you. Indeed, Allah is the only One God. Glory be to Him, [far exalted is He] to have a son. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth, and sufficient is Allah as a Disposer of Affairs.” (Al-Nisa’ :171). Other Ayat of the Holy Quran imply state that calling Christ as the son of Allah is unbelief and that worshiping Christ as a lord is an act of polytheism, **“The Jews say, “Ezra is the son of Allah,” and the Christians say, “The Messiah is the son of Allah.” These are mere words that they utter, imitating the words of the disbelievers before them. May Allah ruin them; how can they be deluded? They have taken their rabbis and monks as lords besides Allah, as well as the Messiah, son of Mary, even though they were commanded to worship only One God; none has the right to be worshiped except Him, glorified is He far above what they associate with Him.”** (Al-Tawbah: 30-31)

Muslims believe in one God, but Christians believe in three Gods: god the father, god the son, and god the Holy Spirit. Assuming that there are three gods raises many logical questions: do these gods always agree? Do they never disagree? Do they agree on various issues such as

having rain, storms, or earthquakes in certain places? If they all agree at all times, so why are there three? Or do you think that each of them has a separate job? Are they just like the Hindus who believe in three gods, one for creation, one for maintenance and one for destruction?

From the Islamic point of view, this description of god is disgraceful, offensive and ridiculous. Islam is primarily based on the belief that a Muslim does not associate any entity at all with Allah, the almighty. Having established that Christians believe in the three enjoined gods, they also worship other gods such as popes, clergymen and saints at their homes and churches. They seek help and forgiveness from them. Many bishops and nuns prostrate for the Pope while in Islam prostration is an act of worship that is exclusively done for Allah alone. Allah is high above their claims. **“They say, “Allah has taken a son.” Glory be to Him! Rather, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and earth - all are devoutly obedient to Him.”** (Al-Baqarah: 116)

4. Crucifixion

Muslims believe that Jesus, peace be upon him, was neither killed nor crucified. The Holy Quran refutes this story completely as Allah says: **“..and for their saying, “We killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of Allah.” But they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it was made to appear to them so. Even those who dispute about it are in doubt; they have no certain knowledge other than conjecture. But they certainly did not kill him.”** (Al-Nisa':157-158)

However, Christian doctrines and books always mention that Jesus was killed on the cross to save the world, and he was happy for that. How can this be true when

Jesus, according to the Bible, was weeping and crying in the garden asking God to help him and save him from them. This clearly contradicts the claim that Jesus was happy to die on the cross to save the world.

The Jews believe that Jesus was a traitor to them and he was a bad man, so they tried every possible means to kill him. They claimed that they crucified him and he died on the cross. But the Muslims believe that Allah gave Jesus the same appearance of that of Judas the Iscariot, the one who revealed Jesus' location to those persecuting him. He was then replaced as Jesus and the executioners thought the victim was Jesus, causing everyone to believe that Jesus was crucified.

Even if we accept that Jesus is son of God, how can it be that God did not save his only son? Or, why was not the God able to protect himself? It is noteworthy that the Holy Quran and the *Hadith* (recorded sayings and acts of Prophet Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) support that belief. It came in the Hadith: Allah's Messenger, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said: **"By the One in Whose hand is myself, definitely the son of Maryam will soon descend among you as a just judge, and he will break the cross, kill the swine, and abolish the *Jizyah*, and wealth will be so abundant that no one will accept it, until a single prostration**

will be better than the world and everything in it.” (Al-Bukhari)

The above hadith essentially suggests that Jesus will return as a just judge between truth and falsehood. Breaking the cross, killing the swine, and so on simply mean that he will correct the false doctrines and beliefs spread about him and his teachings among his followers. Consequently, many of them will follow him. And thus, the followers of Prophet Muhammad and Prophet Jesus, peace be upon both of them, will be united into one *Ummah* (nation). This is the purpose of Jesus' return to earth.

In brief, the Holy Quran makes it clear that Allah saved Jesus from torture and death on the cross and that he will come back to earth as a just ruler. This is perfect in keeping with the Biblical reference to Jesus' prayer to God to save him as well as to his second coming.

According to the Bible, death by crucifixion is for the accursed one; so, one cannot imagine a respectable prophet of Allah being subjected to a death described by the Bible as accursed.

All this simply points to the fact that Jesus, who was a prophet of Allah, was saved by Allah from the pain of torture and the shame of a death on the cross.

5. Jesus: Son of God or Only a Prophet?

Muslims believe that Jesus is a great messenger of Allah and he was sent to the Children of Israel to complete the message of Moses. He and his mother were humans without any divine traits or qualities as the case is with all the messengers of Allah, peace be upon them. Conversely, one of the fundamental beliefs in Christianity is the literal sonship of Jesus Christ to God. This belief comes from two verses in John (3:16) and (5: 1).

If we assume that Jesus is the son of god, would not he have carried the same description and traits of a god? We know it is impossible to get a sheep from a lion or an elephant to give birth to a giraffe. If it is so, Jesus should look like his father the God, and Jesus should act and behave like God. But all his life, and during every aspects of it, Jesus acted exactly like a human. Allah, the Almighty, says in the Holy Quran, **“The Messiah, son of Mary, was no more than a messenger. There were messengers who passed away before him, and His mother was a woman of truth; they both ate food. See how We make Our signs clear to them, yet see how they are deluded!”** (Al- Mā'idah: 75)

However, unlike Muslims, the fact that Jesus has no father but only a mother is not a sufficient reason for the Christians to say that he is the son of Allah. Similarly, Adam and Eve have neither a mother nor a father and still it is easy for Allah to create them. Allah states this fact in the Ayah, **“The similitude of Jesus before Allah is like that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him, “Be,” and he was.”** (Al-Imran: 59) Does not this mean that it is easier for Allah to create his prophet Jesus, peace be upon him, with one parent!

Christians claim that Mary is a human but God’s only son was inside her, and sometimes they say that God himself was incarnated in her. That would never seem to be logical or convincing. Rather, it seems ridiculous. How would God or his son live inside one of His creatures? Jesus grew inside Mary and was fed from her own blood and after she gave birth to him, she carried him, took care of him and cleaned him as any mother does with her newborn baby. Does a god need a human to take care of him, here on earth? Does that sound right for God or his son to go through all that? In sharp contrast to the known life of Jesus, a god never eats, sleeps or gets tired. God does not need to go to the toilet, does not die, does not forget or makes mistakes or feels sorry. These are all human attributes, but Jesus has done them all.

Even if you search the different Bibles, you will discover the contradiction regarding the claim of Jesus' sonship. For example, in Luke 4:41, 'Jesus refused to be called the Son of God by demons. Do you think that Jesus would rebuke the demons, or anyone else for that matter, for telling the truth? Unquestionably, no! Jesus rebuked the demons because they were saying something false by calling him the Son of God. Also, if the demons knew that Jesus was the Christ, for Jesus to shut them up because they called him the Christ is a contradiction to Jesus' mission.

In conclusion, the act of begetting is a physical act and such act is against God's nature. Allah, the Almighty, says the Holy Quran, **"It is not befitting for Allah to beget a son. Glory be to Him! When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, "Be," and it is."** (Maryam: 35)

6. Confession

Nowhere in Islam has it been stated that a specific person or group of individuals possess the authority to grant forgiveness. Unlike Christians who make confessions to a priest, Muslims do not make confessions to anyone but Allah, the Almighty, Who says, **"It is He Who accepts repentance from His slaves and pardons sins, and He knows all what you do."** (Al-Shura: 25) That is based on the

creed of Islamic monotheism where the sole cause for everything in this world is Allah and so, no one can do anything without his permission especially granting forgiveness and pardon.

Muslims only confess directly to Allah and ask forgiveness only from Him. This came not only in the message of our Prophet Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, but by all the messengers of Allah including Jesus, peace be upon them all. It came in the Holy Quran that Prophet Noah ordered his people to direct their submission to Allah and to ask Him to forgive them: **"I said, 'Seek forgiveness from your Lord. Indeed, He is Most Forgiving."** (Noah: 10) The same procedure was made by Prophet Hūd, **"To the people of 'Ād We sent their brother Hūd. He said, "O my people, worship Allah; you have no god other than Him. You are but fabricators."** (Hūd: 50) **"O my people, seek forgiveness of your Lord and turn to Him in repentance; He will send down upon you abundant rain from the sky, and will add strength to your strength. So do not turn away in wickedness."** (Hūd: 52)

Prophet Sālih also ordered his people to worship Allah and ask forgiveness from Him directly: **"To the people of Thamūd, We sent their brother Sālih. He said, "O my people, worship Allah; you have no god except Him. It is He Who brought you into being from the earth and**

settled you therein. So seek His forgiveness then turn to Him in repentance, for My Lord is Ever Near, All-Responsive.” (Hūd: 61)

Prophet Shu‘ayb did the same: **“And to the people of Midian We sent their brother Shu‘ayb. He said, “O my people, worship Allah; you have no god besides Him. Do not give short measure or weight. I see that you are in prosperity, but I fear for you the punishment of an encompassing Day.”** (Hūd: 84) **“ Seek forgiveness of your Lord and turn to Him in repentance. Indeed, My Lord is Most Merciful, Most Affectionate.”** (Hūd: 90)

This was also the message of Prophet Moses: **“And (remember) when Musa (Moses) said to his people: "O my people! Verily, you have wronged yourselves by worshipping the calf. So turn in repentance to your Creator and kill yourselves (the innocent kill the wrongdoers among you), that will be better for you with your Lord." Then He accepted your repentance. Truly, He is the One Who accepts repentance, the Most Merciful.”** (Al-Baqrah: 54)

However in Catholicism, virtually these conditions are being neglected. Not to mention that the past history of the Catholic Church in the mediaeval ages clearly portrays the extreme deviation that took place after getting hold of such ranks and authorities and misusing them as a means of reaching personal goals and obtaining other material

interests. Historians along with knowledgeable and enlightened Christians have endlessly condemned the behavior that took place at that particular period. The Church and the fathers of the church were particularly misled from their true religious duty, some of which can be unfortunately seen in the present day. A few that can be pointed out are: financial corruption, moral corruption, interrogating people's beliefs, torturing and punishing the opposition, selling and dealing forgiveness.

Selling forgiveness by the priest first started when the church passed a rule that as atonement of their sins the penitents were to pay a certain amount of money, but along with that the church would also collect funds from the same person which gradually turned into an essential condition for anyone who wanted to confess and be pardoned from sin. This practice continued to the extent where confession became a mere formality and simply a custom lacking any true substance; its main objective being to make money.

This also lacks reasonable sense. For example, if someone steals something from his employer, should he go to his neighbor and apologize for what he had done rather than going directly to his employer? Definitely, there is no logic in doing so because the offence he committed was not against the neighbor who has no right to punish or forgive that action. Similarly, when a person commits a sin, offending Allah's law and decree, he should go directly to

Him and not to a priest. This is because the priest has no authority from Allah to punish or forgive people.

Another important issue is that man's honor and respect is so valued and significant in Islam. A Muslim should only confess to his lord as a gesture of repentance and asking for forgiveness, for one will only obtain more respect and honor when he confesses to Allah. In Islam one does not have to disclose his sins (small or big) to anyone; he must keep his secrets (regarding his sins) to himself. The prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said, **"whoever covers up the fault of a Muslim, Allah will cover up his fault on the Day of Resurrection"** (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

7. Priesthood

The concept of priesthood is not found in Islam; there is no one holier than Allah. No matter if you are educated in religion, all theologians are not holy simply because they took up religion or devoted their lives for religion. You might have two brothers; one takes up engineering and the other one takes up religion. The engineer gets promotions from junior to senior engineer while the other one starts as a deacon, then promoted to a priest and then became a bishop. He might get promotions as the time passes and, depending on other factors, he may progress up to the level of a Cardinal and he may become a Pope. Even the Pope, who is claimed to have the keys of heaven, is not born a Pope. He went through all the lower religious rank positions and was then promoted from one up to another. However,

did he get promoted by Allah? Certainly, the answer is no. The Pope himself is elected from a number of Cardinals and Allah does not grant him that position neither the keys of heaven. When Popes die suddenly or found dead in their beds, the council of cardinals usually elects one of those cardinals - who are always or mostly Europeans - to be the new Pope. Again, the decision regarding who becomes the Pope is not Allah's decision.

In Islam, we do not have clergymen titles. Those who are more knowledgeable than other average Muslims are known as *Ulama'* or (scholars). This title does not give them immunity against sins or set them closer to Allah unless their inner belief and closeness to Allah is superior to others. Their vast knowledge should make them know Allah better and thus fear Him more. Allah, Exalted be He, says: **"Only the people of knowledge among His slaves fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is All-Mighty, All-Forgiving."** (Fātir: 28) This very critical issue is only judged by Allah Who knows what everyone conceals or reveals. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

"O people, We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may recognize one another. Indeed, the most noble of you before Allah is the most righteous among you. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware." (Al-Hujurāt: 13). Moreover, it came in the prophet's Hadith

narrated by Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said: **"Allah does not look at your figures, nor at your attire but He looks at your hearts and accomplishments."** (Sahih Muslim)

Clergymen in Christianity, Catholics in particular, do not get married and Nuns do not, either. On the other way, Muslims do not see any logic in that. It is normal that every man needs a woman and every woman needs a man; that is our nature. There is no need for this suffering!

The greatest Muslim scholars are married. They have sexual intercourse with their wives and they have children. They live normal life and at the same time they worship Allah day and night. They also deliver preaches and religious ceremonies and they author books. Many of the new converts to Islam who were clergy people before are married now. We think that when a clergyman is married, that would even help him to do his religious duties better. There is no point to say that priests and nuns do not want sex or do not have a desire for that. Then, why do we often hear about abuse scandals of Christian clergymen and women who have committed illegal sex with each other or with people from outside the church? More surprisingly, news about child abuse by priests has gone viral recently. I am sure this happens because they have neglected and abandoned a natural desire in humans that is unsatisfied

legally through lawful marriage. If you convert to Islam, you will have no problem in that. You can be a religious man and get married at the same time. Allah says in the Holy Quran: **“Then We sent Our messengers in their footsteps, and We sent after them Jesus, son of Mary; We gave him the Gospel, and instilled kindness and mercy in the hearts of those who followed him. As for monasticism, they invented it - We did not prescribe it for them - seeking thereby Allah’s pleasure, yet they did not observe it faithfully. So We gave those who believed among them their reward, but most of them are evildoers.”** (Al-Hadīd: 27)

All human being stand individually responsible for their own actions and their own beliefs. No one can take that responsibility away from them. If you think that anyone is ordering you to act against what you sincerely believe to be the will of Allah, you are duty bound to disobey that order and instead obey Allah. This is the principle that “Allah is the sovereign”. To find answers about issues related to judgements and regulations in Islam, you will find it useful to consult those who have studied the religion's sources carefully, the scholars.

8. Baptism

There is no baptism in Islam in the sense that it exists in the Christian tradition. Baptism signifies salvation for the most part. In Islam we do not have the principle or concept of salvation as we believe we are born innocent and commit sins in our lives later on due to weakness, lust, greed...etc. So a ritual such "baptism" would not really fit into Islam as there is not a concept for it to fall under. In the Catholic world, there is a popular belief that teaches that all humans inherit sin from their parents. The doctrine is often called the Original Sin. So, Christians baptize their children because they say children are born with sin; the sin of Adam and Eve when they opposed Allah and listened to the Satan and ate from the tree that Allah warned them not to eat from.

Jews, Christians and Muslims all agree that Allah is the most merciful. If that is so, how is it possible that Allah did not forgive Adam and Eve for their first small sin according to Christianity? Yet, he is prepared to forgive millions of Christians who commit major sins such as adultery, theft

and homosexuality day and night. This is plain contradictory. How it can be consistent with the mercy of Allah that an innocent newly born infant is born with an inherited sin! That infant is still immature and committed nothing to be labelled as sinful. Allah says in the Holy Quran: **“Say [O Prophet], “Should I seek a lord other than Allah, when He is the Lord of everything?” Every soul will face the consequence of its actions. No bearer of burden will bear the burden of another. Then to your Lord is your return, and He will inform you concerning that over which you used to differ (Al-An‘ām: 164)**

However, Muslims believe that Allah has forgiven Adam. Allah says in the Holy Quran: **“Then Adam received some words from his Lord, and He accepted his repentance. He is the Acceptor of repentance, the Most Merciful.” (Al-Baqarah)**

Muslims do not baptize their children because children are pure and they did not commit the sin of Adam and Eve and Allah, the Most Merciful, surely forgave Adam and Eve for that.

This sin is much smaller than the sins people commit everyday like adultery, theft, or murder. If someone kills ten people or more, his children will never be executed just because of their father’s sin. Surely, this cannot be done according the laws of justice on the earth. So, the question

is: “Do the humans on the earth have more justice than their Lord?” If we assume that Allah is still angry with Adam and Eve and the new born infants, would not we say to ourselves that Allah is not the Most Merciful? Allah’s mercy is far beyond what you believe. In Islam, we believe that all the children who die before puberty or before sexual maturity are admitted to the paradise. In this sense, Imam Al-Nawawi said: “The reliable Muslim scholars agreed that any Muslim child who dies will be among the people of Paradise because he was not responsible (i.e., had not yet reached the age of account). (Commentary on Sahih Muslim, 16/207).

It came also in the Hadith of Samurah, a Companion of the Prophet, may Allah be pleased with him, **that the Prophet, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, saw the children of the Muslims and the children of the *Mushrikin* (disbelievers) with Ibrahim (Abraham) ,peace be upon him, in the Paradise.** (Al-Bukhari,) Islam guides that every child that is born is born on nature, and the inherent nature of all human beings is to believe in the One Lord Creator Who created everything in existence.it is only his parents/guardians who formulate rituals to initiate them into their religions other than Islam. What contradicts belief and even logic is that baptism is done once and for all, and is often considered valid, even if the child eventually apostatizes.

9. Islamic Law (*Fiqh* and *Shariah*)

For a proper understanding of the historical development of Islamic law, the terms *Fiqh* and *Shariah* need to be defined. *Fiqh* has been loosely translated into

English as “Islamic law” and so has *Shariah*, but these terms are not synonymous either in the Arabic language or to the Muslim scholar.

Fiqh literally means the true understanding of what is intended. An example of this usage can be found in the Hadith of the Prophet, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, **“To whomsoever Allah wishes good, He gives the *Fiqh* (true understanding) of the Religion”** (Sahih Al-Bukhari) Technically, however, *Fiqh* refers to the science of deducing Islamic laws from evidence found in the sources of Islamic law. By extension it also means the body of Islamic laws so deduced.

Shariah, literally means, a waterhole where animals gather daily to drink, or the straight path as in the Quranic Ayah, **“Then We put you [O Prophet] on a clear way of the religion; so follow it and do not follow the desires of those who have no knowledge.”** (Al-Jāthiyah: 18)

Islamically, however *Shariah* refers to the sum total of Islamic laws which were revealed to Prophet Muhammad, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, and which are recorded in the Holy Quran as well as deducible from the Prophet’s divinely-guided lifestyle (the Sunnah).

From the previous two definitions, the following three differences may be deduced:

1. *Shariah* is the body of revealed laws found both in the Holy Quran and in the Sunnah, while *Fiqh* is a body of laws deduced from *Shariah* to cover specific situations not directly treated in *Shariah* law.

2. *Shariah* is fixed and unchangeable, whereas *Fiqh* changes according to the circumstances under which it is applied.

3. The laws of *Shariah* are, for the most part, general: they lay down basic principles. In contrast, the laws of *Fiqh* tend to be specific: they demonstrate how the basic principles of *Shariah* should be applied in given circumstances.

The primary difference between Islamic law and other legal systems is that the legislator, the originator of law, is Allah, the Almighty. Accordingly, the Holy Quran is the principal source of Islamic legislation. It contains the rules by which the Muslim world is governed and forms the basis for relations between man and his Lord, between individuals, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, as well as between man and things which are part of creation.

Though there are other sources of law—i.e., *Ijma'*, (consensus), *Qiyas*, (analogy), *ijtihad*, (progressive reasoning by analogy)—the Holy Quran is the first and foremost source, followed by the Hadith and Sunna of the prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him.

- **The Holy Quran:** The Holy Quran is “revealed speech to Prophet Muhammad, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, which is inimitable, whose recitation is considered worship, and which has been mass-transmitted to us.” It is definitively authentic. The word of Allah is absolute; that is to say, it is independent of time and place; it addresses all, not just those at the time of the Prophet, nor simply those in the Arabian Peninsula. Any element drawn from other legal sources must absolutely be in full conformity with the word of Allah in the Holy Quran.
- **The Sunnah of the Prophet,** may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him: The Sunna is defined as “statements, actions, tacit approvals, or qualities related about the Prophet, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him.”

These two sources represent foundations for determining the conformity of any action with the rules and purpose of Sharia. However, Sharia remains open to possible interpretations and development. Thus, the other secondary sources of Sharia are:

Ijma’ (*Consensus*): Linguistically, it means to be determined and tenacious. In the terminology of the jurists, it is “the agreement of the *Umma* (nation) of Prophet Muhammad, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, on a matter of religious significance.”

This agreement removes any doubts or alternative possibilities that might arise through an exclusive reliance on the proof itself. For this reason, an object of such a consensus must be acted upon; it is impermissible to oppose it. A consensus must be based on evidence, for it is wrong to adopt an opinion without evidence in matters of Sharia. The Islamic nation cannot unanimously agree on an error, as is narrated in numerous Hadiths. An example is that which is narrated by Abdullah bin Dinar on the authority of Ibn ‘Omar, who said that the Prophet, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, said, **“Allah will not unite my Umma (or, perhaps, he said the Umma of Muhammad) on misguidance. The Hand of Allah is with the group, and whoever deviates from it takes himself to Hell.”** Abu Issa explained that, according to scholars, “the group” refers to the people of *fiqh* and Hadith.” Another example is narrated by Anas bin Malik who said, **“I heard the Prophet saying ‘My Umma (Nation) will not unite on misguidance, so if you see them differing, follow the great majority’”** The basis of *Ijma’* may be a text from the Holy Quran and Sunna, or it may equally be an analogical argument, custom, or other types of *Ijtihad* (individual interpretation).

Qiyas (Analogical reasoning): *Qiyas* is “the application of one case to another because of a common element

between them for the purposes of affirming or denying a judgement on both of them.”

The scholars proved the authoritativeness of *Qiyas* through many evidences. These include the ayah, **“Then So take a lesson, O you people of insight.”** (Al-Hashr: 2). Other proofs include the Ayat, **“Whenever they hear any news of security or fear, they spread it. If they referred it to the Messenger or to those in authority among them, those with sound judgment among them could know it. Were it not for Allah’s grace and mercy, you would all have followed Satan, except for a few.”** (Al-Nisa’: 83), and **“We have missed nothing in the Record, then to their Lord they will be gathered.”** (Al-An’ām: 38).

We may add to these Ayat other evidences, such as the Hadith of the Prophet, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, when sending Mu’adh to Yemen. When he did so, he asked him, **“If a judicial matter comes before you, how will you judge.”** Mu’adh said, **“I will judge by the Book of Allah.”** The Prophet replied, **“And if you don’t find it in the Book of Allah?”** He responded, **“Then, by the Sunna of the Messenger of Allah.”** He said, **“And if you find it neither in the Sunna of the Messenger of Allah nor in His Book?”** He replied, **“I will exercise my judgement, and will not refrain from doing so.”** The Prophet struck his

chest, and said, “Praise be to Allah Who endowed the messenger of the Messenger of Allah with that which pleases the Messenger of Allah.”

10. The Holy Quran

The Holy Quran is the literal word of Allah, which He revealed to His Prophet Muhammad, may Allah’s peace and

blessings be upon him, through the Angel Gabriel. It was memorized by Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, who then dictated it to his Companions. They, in turn, memorized it, wrote it down, and reviewed it with the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him. Moreover, the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, reviewed the Holy Quran with the Angel Gabriel once each year and twice in the last year of his life. It contains 114 chapters; each of which is called *Surah*. Each *Surah* contains different number of *Ayat* (plural of *Ayah* which means verse) Since it was revealed until this day, there has always been a huge number of Muslims who have memorized all of the Holy Quran letter by letter. Some of them have even been able to memorize all of the Holy Quran by the age of ten. Not a single character of it has been changed, and it will maintain its originality until the Day of Judgment.

Unlike other divine books such as the Bible or the Torah that were rewritten and changed with thousands of different copies available all over the Christian world, there is only one version of the Holy Quran. Undoubtedly, Muslims believe in all the divine books: the Bible of Jesus, the Torah of Moses, the Psalms of David and the Scriptures of Abraham and Moses. Muslims believe in them as they were revealed by Allah in their original words. All the divine texts that were revealed to the prophets have not been able

to stand the test of time the way the Holy Quran does. They have been altered and changed over the centuries. Allah says in the Holy Quran: **“It is We Who have sent down the Reminder, and it is We Who will preserve it”** (Al-Hijr: 9)

Allah, Exalted be He, also says, **“We have revealed to you [O Prophet] the Book in truth, confirming the scriptures that came before it and as a criterion over them. So judge between them according to what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their desires in disregard of the truth that has come to you. To each of you We have ordained a law and a way of life. If Allah had willed, He would have made you a single community, but He tests you in what He has given you. So compete with one another in doing good deeds. To Allah you will all return, then He will inform you concerning things over which you used to differ.”** (Al-Mā'idah: 48). This ayah demonstrates that the Holy Quran has been revealed in truth and confirms what has been revealed beforehand of the revelations and it is a judge and witness over the previous books. In other words, it preserves, protects and witnesses to the truth found in the earlier revelations.

One thing which surprises non-Muslims who are examining the book very closely is that the Holy Quran does not appear to them to be what they expected. What they

assume is that they have an old book which came fourteen centuries ago from the Arabian Desert; and they expect that the book should look something like that - an old book from the desert. The Holy Quran is not a narrative book that records the life of the Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, as it might seem to many non-Muslims who have never read it. Then they find out that it does not resemble what they expected at all. Additionally, one of the first things that some people assume is that, because it is an old book which comes from the desert, it should talk about the desert.

On the contrary, the Holy Quran, which was revealed fourteen centuries ago, mentioned facts that have only recently been discovered or proven by scientists. This proves, without any doubt, that the Holy Quran must be the literal word of Allah, revealed by Him to Prophet Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, and that the Holy Quran was not authored by Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, or by any other human being. This also proves that Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, is truly a prophet sent by Allah. It is beyond reason that anyone fourteen hundred years ago would have known these facts discovered or proven only recently with advanced equipment and sophisticated scientific methods. One

example, among many, is what the Holy Quran mentioned on human embryonic development.

In the Holy Quran, Allah tells us about the stages of man's embryonic development:

“We created man from an extract of clay, then We placed him as a sperm-drop in a safe place, then We made the sperm-drop into a clinging clot, then We made the clinging clot into a lump, then We made the lump into bones, and We clothed the bones with flesh, and then We developed it into another creation. So Blessed is Allah, the Best of Creators.” (Al- Mu'minūn :12-14)

Literally, the Arabic word *alaqah* has three meanings: (1) leech, (2) suspended thing, and (3) blood clot. In comparing a leech to an embryo in the *alaqah* stage, we find similarity between the two. Also, the embryo at this stage obtains nourishment from the blood of the mother, similar to the leech, which feeds on the blood of others. The second meaning of the word *alaqah* is “suspended thing.” This exactly draws the picture of the suspension of the embryo, during the *alaqah* stage, in the womb of the mother.

The third meaning of the word *alaqah* is “blood clot.” We find that the external appearance of the embryo and its sacs during the *alaqah* stage is similar to that of a blood clot. This is due to the presence of relatively large amounts of blood present in the embryo during this stage. Also during

this stage, the blood in the embryo does not circulate until the end of the third week. Thus, the embryo at this stage is like a clot of blood.

So the three meanings of the word *alaqah* correspond accurately to the descriptions of the embryo at the *alaqah* stage. The next stage mentioned in the ayah is the *mudghah* stage. The Arabic word *mudghah* means “chewed substance.” If one were to take a piece of gum and chew it in his or her mouth and then compare it with an embryo at the *mudghah* stage, we would conclude that the embryo at the *mudghah* stage is similar in appearance to a chewed substance. This is because of the somites at the back of the embryo that “somewhat resemble teeth-marks in a chewed substance.

How could Muhammad, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, have possibly known all these scientific details fourteen hundred years ago, when scientists have only recently discovered this using advanced equipment and powerful microscopes which never existed at that time? Hamm and Leeuwenhoek were the first scientists to observe human sperm cells (spermatozoa) using an improved microscope in 1677 (more than 1000 years after Muhammad). They mistakenly thought that the sperm cell contained a miniature preformed human being that grew when it was deposited in the female genital tract.

In 1981, during the Seventh Medical Conference in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, Professor Emeritus Keith L. Moore, one of the world's most prominent scientists in the fields of anatomy and embryology, said: "It has been a great pleasure for me to help clarify statements in the Holy Quran about human development. It is clear to me that these statements must have come to Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, from Allah, because almost all of this knowledge was not discovered until many centuries later. This proves to me that Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, must have been a messenger of Allah. Consequently, Professor Moore was asked the following question: "Does this mean that you believe that the Holy Quran is the word of God?" He replied: "I find no difficulty in accepting this." During one conference, Professor Moore stated: "...Because the staging of human embryos is complex, owing to the continuous process of change during development, it is proposed that a new system of classification could be developed using the terms mentioned in the Holy Quran and Sunnah. The proposed system is simple, comprehensive, and conforms to present embryological knowledge. The intensive studies of the Holy Quran and Hadith in the last four years have revealed a system for classifying human embryos that is amazing since it was recorded in the seventh century A.D. Although Aristotle, the founder of the

science of embryology, realized that chick embryos developed in stages from his studies of hen's eggs in the fourth century B.C., he did not give any details about these stages. As far as it is known from the history of embryology, little was known about the staging and classification of human embryos until the twentieth century. For this reason, the descriptions of the human embryo in the Holy Quran cannot be based on scientific knowledge in the seventh century. The only reasonable conclusion is: these descriptions were revealed to Muhammad from God. He could not have known such details because he was an illiterate man with absolutely no scientific training."

The Holy Quran introduces itself as being the guidance for the worlds, **"We have sent down to you the Book as an explanation of everything, and as a guidance, mercy and glad tidings for the Muslims."** (An-Nahl: 89)

The Holy Quran deals with many topics that concern Muslims. The following are some of them:

- **Belief:** Faith in Allah, the Angels, the Messengers of Allah, His Revealed Books , Predestination, and the Day of Resurrection
- **Commitment to Islam:** Submission and Allah-consciousness, love of the Lord calmness and wellbeing.
- **Challenging idolatry and materialism**

- **The pillars:** the Two Testimonies of Faith, Daily Prayers, Zakat, Fasting and Pilgrimage to Makkah.
- **The Divine laws:** Halal (prohibited things) and Haram (lawful things), marriage and divorce, inheritance, penal laws, vows and contracts, Alcohol and drugs, forbidden, tools of Satan to create conflict, Sexuality: inner-human energy to be controlled, modesty. Magic and wizardry are forbidden, the miracles were not magic.
- **Spiritual values:** Mindfulness and alertness, reliance on Allah, commitment and submission, repentance and seeking Divine forgiveness, supplication and private prayer, Jihad for self-improvement and justice, prayers of the Prophets, sacrifice, spiritual growth, worship, Divine remembrance.
- **Moral virtues:** Truthfulness, honesty, kindness, generosity, forgiveness, patience, gratitude, modesty, humility and courage.
- **The condemnation of moral vices:** Falsehood, arrogance, anger, greed and jealousy.
- **Fulfilling social obligations:** Caring for parents, kindness to relatives, neighbors, loyalty to friends and country, leadership, peace and reconciliation, the family: marriage, motherhood, family feuds.
- **Guidelines on earning and spending wealth:** A test, hoarding, cheating, squandering, miserliness all condemned.

- **Coping with sufferings and difficulties:** Coping with the challenges of life, sickness, war and peace.
- **Stories of the Prophets:** Remarkable humans endowed with sublime character to be role models, their trials and tribulations are golden and to be admired.

Reciting the Holy Quran is the most sublime and edifying occupation for the Muslim, even when he or she does not intellectually understand its words, as is the case with most non-Arab believers. The Muslims' desire to recite the Holy Quran as beautifully as possible, and the art of *Tilāwah* (the proper recitation) has developed into a science.

11. Cleanliness

Muslims throughout the world have extremely high standards of personal hygiene because Islam places great emphasis on both physical and spiritual cleanliness and purification. Muslims are required to take care of their

personal hygiene by assuring that they are well groomed, and that their bodies, clothing, and surroundings are clean. Prophet Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, informed us about the importance of cleanliness when he said, **"Cleanliness is half of faith."** (Sahih Muslim) More specifically, Allah, Exalted be He, says: **"Allah loves those who frequently repent and He loves those who purify themselves."** (Al-Baqarah: 222)

Personal hygiene is desirable at all times; however, certain aspects of personal hygiene are not only important but also compulsory. According to scholars, cleanliness is of three kinds: purification, or ritual washing in order to perform prayer; keeping the body, clothing, and environment clean; and specifically removing the dirt or grime that collects in the various parts of the body, such as teeth, nostrils, under the nails, in the armpits and around the pubic area.

It is so important to be free from filth, both spiritual and physical. Physical purity is a pre-condition to perform any prayer and it is accomplished by using water. Allah, Exalted be He, says: **"O you who believe, when you rise up for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands up to the elbows; wipe over your heads; and wash your feet up to the ankles. If you are in a state of major impurity, cleanse yourselves [by taking a bath]."** (Al-Mā'idah: 6)

Prior to obligatory or voluntary prayer, a person must assure that he is in a state of cleanliness. This is achieved by performing either *wudu* (often translated as ablution) or *ghusl* (a full bath). Wudu rids the body of minor impurities, and ghusl cleanses the body of major impurities. *Ghusl* must be performed after sexual intercourse or any sexual activity that releases bodily fluids. *Ghusl* is also performed at the completion of a woman's menstrual period or post-partum bleeding.

Ritually cleansing the body by performing *wudu* includes washing the hands, rinsing the mouth and nose, washing the face, washing the arms up to the elbows, wiping the head (and beard), washing the ears, including behind the ears and washing the feet up to and including the ankles. A person does not have to repeat this ablution for every prayer unless his wudu is broken by one of the following nullifiers: urinating or defecating, passing wind, eating camel meat, falling asleep while lying down, losing consciousness, directly touching the genital area or becoming sexually excited sufficiently to emit a discharge. The state of cleanliness is also compulsory before touching or reciting the Holy Quran.

A woman is not supposed to perform prayer, enter the mosque or touch the Holy Quran until she is fully clean and the menses has stopped. For menstruation, *ghusl* is required after menses has fully stopped. For maternity, the

period a woman must wait before *ghusl* is forty days. Sexual intercourse also must not be practiced until this period of time for the two cases has passed and the woman is fully clean. Using toilet paper is not enough for Muslims to be considered cleansed after they have relieved themselves. Instead, water must be used unless it is not available. Under certain conditions, ritual purification can be achieved without water. This is called *tayammum*, or dry ablution. If water is not available in sufficient quantities, or if it would be dangerous to use water, for instance if a person was wounded or very ill, clean earth may be used instead. *Tayammum* is performed by striking the hands lightly over clean earth and then passing the palm of each hand on the back of the other, the dust is then blown off and the hands are passed across the face. These actions are performed instead of *wudu* or *ghusl*. The following ayah illustrates this ruling: **“But if you are ill, on a journey, or have relieved yourselves, or had sexual contact with women and find no water, then purify yourselves with clean earth, and wipe your faces and hands therewith. Allah does not want to impose hardship on you, rather He wants to purify you and complete His favor upon you, so that you may be grateful.”** (Al- Mā'idah: 6)

The Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, include advice about actions that are part of a natural way to maintain personal hygiene. He said

that, “**Five acts are a part of *Fitrah* (natural instinct): circumcision, shaving pubic hair, plucking hair from the armpits, shortening the moustache, and clipping the nails.**” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

12. Prayer (*Salah*)

Salah (*Salat*) is the Arabic term for the ritual prayer that is obligatory for Muslims to perform five times a day. It forms one of the five pillars of Islam. The five prayers are:

Fajr (Dawn) which takes place at pre-dawn

Dhuhr (Noon), which takes place just after the sun reaches its zenith

Asr (Afternoon) which takes place between noon and sunset

Maghrib (Sunset) which takes place just after sunset

Isha’ (Night) which takes place during the early night/at night-time

Salah involves a number of physical movements – standing, bowing, prostrating, and sitting. It also involves the recitation of Ayat from the Holy Quran in Arabic along with

a number of supplications. Muslims have to face the direction of the Ka'ba (the Sacred House of Allah in Makkah) whenever they perform their prayer. These physical movements, recitations, and supplications are all done to show humility and submission to Allah. The principle of Salah is to ensure Muslims maintain their faith and devotion to Allah, to increase their closeness to Allah, and to remain conscious of the importance of faith and submission to their Creator.

Furthermore, it is an integral part of the lifestyle of a Muslim. Through prayer, Muslims are required each day to ponder on the Ayat of the Holy Quran, the testimonies of faith, and Allah's attributes. Allah, Exalted be He, orders Muslims to perform Salah, saying: **"Be mindful of the prayers, especially the middle prayer; and stand before Allah in complete devotion."** (Al-Baqarah: 238) Allah, Exalted be He, also says: **"Recite [O Prophet] what is revealed to you of the Book, and establish prayer, for indeed prayer restrains one from immoral acts and wickedness. Indeed, the remembrance of Allah is of greater merit. And Allah knows all what you do."** (Al-'Ankabūt: 45)

There is special importance dedicated to the Friday prayer. This prayer is performed in congregation at the local Mosque and is led by an Imam (leader). There are many other prayers in Islam, such as the funeral prayer,

and Eid prayer, which is a prayer traditionally performed on the mornings of Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha yearly celebrations. Other important prayer rituals also include *Taraaweeh*, which is a voluntary prayer offered every evening during the Holy month of Ramadan.

As with all of the Five Pillars of Islam, Salah is a highly important obligation upon all Muslims and is essential to ensuring we stay within the boundaries of Islam and remain mindful of one's faith.

Preparation before Salah:

Before beginning to pray, one must be in a state of cleanliness. This is done by performing *wudu* (ablution). In other cases, *Tayammum* (dry ablution) or *Ghusl* (full wash of the body) are also acceptable methods of purification. The one who is required to perform the prayer must observe the following:

- To be a mature and a sane Muslim
- To have the proper intention to pray Salah and to know whether one is praying obligatory or voluntary Salah
- To have completed *wudu*
- To be covering his/her private parts. For males, clothes should cover the area from the naval (bellybutton) to just below the knees. For females' clothes should cover the whole body except hands and face
- To be praying at the prescribed times for each Salah

- To pray with his/her face directed towards the Ka'bah in Makkah
- To wear clean clothes
- To pray in a clean place

13. Fasting

Fasting in Islam means abstinence from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual intercourse from dawn to sunset. It is an annual obligation during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Fasting was imposed on former communities of believers in earlier divine religions.

The Holy Quran states that the main purpose of fasting is to help us be more conscious of Allah and more obedient to Him. Allah says in the Holy Quran: **“O you who believe, fasting is prescribed upon you as it was prescribed upon those who were before you, so that you may become righteous. [Fasting is for] specific number of days; but if anyone of you is ill or on a journey, he should make up for those days. As for those who can only fast with hardship, a compensation can be made by feeding a needy person [for each day]. But anyone who volunteers to give more, it is better for him. Yet fasting is better for you, if only you knew.”** (Al-Baqarah: 183-184)

Someone might ask: Why has Allah, Exalted be He, in His wisdom, prescribed fasting for many nations?

The answer is that the purpose of fasting is clearly defined as being for the development of Allah-consciousness (piety) in the believer's heart, since only Allah, the Almighty, knows who is actually fasting and who is not.

Consequently, the one who is fasting refrains from eating and drinking based on an awareness of Allah. Regular fasting enhances that awareness, which subsequently leads to the implanting of righteousness in the heart of the individual.

Fasting teaches sincerity and engenders devotion. It helps us develop a sense of social conscience, patience, self-restraint, will power and compassion for needy members of the society.

Fasting in the month of Ramadan is an obligatory act of worship for all Muslims who have attained puberty. Women who are having their menstrual period or who have not fully recovered from childbirth must postpone the fast until they are completely out of their given conditions. In addition, those who are ill or on travel may choose to postpone their fast.

The month of Ramadan brings many blessings multiplied for those who do good. The poor and the needy receive food, clothing and money from the well-off in the community. Zakat, a wealth purifying alms, and donations are usually given at this time of the year since many Muslims wish to take the opportunity of multiplied rewards from Allah. An important point to be noticed is that fasting enhances the inner self-observation among people especially children.

Also, observing modesty and good conduct is more emphasized during this month. Christians have what is called lent or the fasting in Easter. We know they chose something to give up and during that period, they abstain from it. It could be something like chocolate, smoking or newspapers. Christians in the middle east give up anything that comes from animals, a bit more done than the western Christians but they never do as much as Muslims.

In addition, supererogatory fasting is encouraged for Muslims, though it is voluntary, for its great rewards. Supererogatory fasting includes the following:

1. The best of observance is that of the Prophet *Dawud* (David), peace be upon him, who used to observe the fast of every other day. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said: "**The best of fasting is the fast of *Dawud*, peace be upon him. He used to fast for one day and break his fast for one day.**" (Sunan Al-Nasa'i)
2. Also, among the most excellent fast observance after Ramadan is the Month of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic Calendar. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said, "**The best month for observing fasting after Ramadan is Muharram.**" (Muslim) It is emphasized to observe fasting the tenth of Muharram as it is a means of effacing all the sins committed during the past year.

3. Observing the fast of six days in Shawwal, the month that follows the month of Ramadan. It is preferable to observe them consecutively after the Eid.
4. Observing the fast of the White Days, i.e. the 13th, the 14th, and the 15th of every month whose reward equals the lifetime's observance.
5. The observance of the fast of every Mondays and Thursdays. On these days man's deeds are displayed before Allah, therefore, it is praiseworthy to observe the fast of these two days.
6. The observance of the first nine days of Dhu- Hijjah. The best of which is the 9th, the Day of Arafat. Observing it atones for the sins that were committed in the past year and the year to come.

14. Hajj or Pilgrimage

Allah, the Almighty, says in the Holy Quran, **“The first House [of worship] established for mankind was the one at Bakkah [Makkah], full of blessings and guidance for the worlds. In it are clear signs [such as] the standing place of Abraham; whoever enters it will be safe. Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to Allah upon all people who are able to make their way to it; whoever disbelieves, then Allah is in no need for the worlds.”** (Al-Imran: 96-97)

Hajj or pilgrimage to Makkah is the fifth pillar of Islam. Muslims must go for Hajj to the holy land of Makkah once in their life as Allah, Exalted be He, ordered Muslims in the Holy Quran to perform Hajj, **“And Complete Hajj and ‘Umrah for Allah.”** (Al-Baqarah: 196)

The Holy Ka’bah, in the middle of the Sacred Mosque of Makkah, was built by Prophet Abraham and his son Ismael, peace be upon them, almost 4,000 years ago. That is before Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, peace be upon them. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

“The first House [of worship] established for mankind was the one at Bakkah [Makkah], full of blessings and guidance for the worlds. In it are clear signs [such as] the standing place of Abraham; whoever enters it will be safe. Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to Allah upon all people who are able to make their way to it; whoever disbelieves, then Allah is in no need for the worlds.”
(Al- Imran: 96-97).

There are some prerequisites that must be found in a person for Hajj to be incumbent on him:

1. He/she must be a Muslim.
2. He/she must be an adult.
3. He/she must be of a sound state of mind.
4. He/she must be free.

5. He/she must have the necessary physical power and financial ability.

During Hajj, pilgrims remember the story of Abraham and his son Ismael when Allah ordered Abraham to sacrifice his only son. Abraham and Ismael obeyed Allah's command, but Satan appeared to them and to his mother to convince them to oppose Allah's command. They all stoned the devil and went ahead. But Allah saved Ismael by replacing him with a big sheep. The pilgrims sacrifice sheep and give their meat to the poor. Depending on various rules of Hajj rituals, this sacrifice can be obligatory or voluntary.

As a reward from Allah, Hajj wipes off past sins: It was narrated that the Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said: **"He who performs Hajj for Allah's pleasure and avoids all lewdness and sins will return after Hajj free from all sins as he was the day his mother gave birth to him."** (Al-Bukhari and Muslim) In another Hadith, the Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said: **"The reward of Hajj *Mabrur* (a faultless Hajj that is free of sin and is graced with Divine acceptance and pleasure)." is nothing save Paradise."** (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

15. Polygamy

It should be noted that there are no scriptural accounts of Jesus prohibiting polygyny, and early Christians were polygynous following Jewish tradition. Not a single church council in the early centuries opposed polygyny nor was any obstacle placed in the way of this practice.

Before talking about polygamy, it is important to shed light on marriage in Islam. Marriage has been ordained by Allah as the correct and legal way to produce children and replenish the earth. Nevertheless, marriage in Islam can never be viewed merely as means of uniting the male body with a female body to produce offspring, nor was marriage instituted for satisfying natural desires or quenching passion. Its goals are much deeper in meaning than those obvious physical realities. Allah, the Most High, illuminates this fact in the Holy Quran: **“And among His signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves that you may find comfort in them, and He placed between you love and mercy. Indeed, there are signs in this for people who reflect..”** (Ar-Rūm: 21)

Moreover, Islamic marriage lays rights and corresponding responsibilities on each spouse. Children born in wedlock are given legitimacy and share in inheritance from their parents. They hold the names of their

legal fathers. Marriage establishes an atmosphere for the continuity and extension of the family which will be positively reflected on the peacefulness and tranquility of the entire society. This goes in sharp contrast to the growing trends on marriage in the West. In recent decades, there have been more alternatives to marriage than ever before. Cohabitation - living together outside of marriage - has greatly increased among young, never-married adults, as well as the divorced. For example, more western women have children outside of marriage, ignoring the traditionally sanctioned sequence of marriage followed by childbearing.

Polygamy in the Quran

The Muslim scripture, the Holy Quran, is the only known world scripture to explicitly limit polygamy and places strict restrictions upon its practice: Allah, the Most High, says: **“If you fear that you may not maintain justice with orphan girls [by marrying them] then marry women of your choice - two, three, or four; but if you fear that you may not maintain justice, then marry only one, or slave-girls you may own. That is more likely to avoid committing injustice.”** (Al-Nisa’: 3)

The Quran limited the maximum number of wives to four. It further reformed the institution of polygamy by requiring equal treatment to all wives. The Muslim is not permitted to differentiate between his wives in regards to

sustenance and expenditures, time or other obligations of husbands. Islam does not allow a man to marry another woman if he will not be fair in his treatment. It is also forbidden to discriminate against the wives or their children. Besides, a woman may stipulate that her husband must not marry any other woman as a second wife in her prenuptial contract. The point that is often misunderstood in the West is that women in other cultures - especially African and Islamic - do not necessarily look at polygamy as a sign of women's degradation. Consequently, to equate polygamy with degrading women is an ethnocentric judgment of other societies. Even though polygamy is permissible, its actual practice is quite rare in many Muslim societies. Even those who are financially capable of looking after additional families are often reluctant to do get married to a second wife due to the psychological burdens of handling more than one wife. One can safely say that the number of polygamous marriages in the Muslim world is much less than the number of extramarital affairs in the West. The importance of forming a family is underscored by a Hadith of the Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, who said: **"When a man marries, he has fulfilled half of his religion, so let him fear Allah regarding the remaining half."** (Al-Baihaqi)

In general, females outnumber males in almost every country and the birth rate is always higher on the women's

side in any society. Let's remember that men usually work with hard machinery, under cranes, high buildings, mines and other high-risk jobs. So, they are always exposed to injury and death. On the other hand, women usually do less risky jobs and so they are less likely to have accidents. During wars, unlike women, a greater number of men lose their lives as the majority of soldiers are males. For example, if we assume that the number of women is more than men by 10% in a given society, this means that in a nation of one million people there will be 100,000 women who will not find men for marriage. In the case of Christianity, where a man can marry only one woman, 10% of women will have no place in the married life. This number will be horrible when we talk about a nation of 100 million people as 10 million women cannot get married. For example, the USA has a population of more than 300 million people which means that about 30 million women cannot find men to marry. In such case, a woman has only one of two choices. The first one is to be a good woman and never have sex out of marriage all her life and never commit the sin of having illegal sex with someone who is not her husband. This choice seems to be very hard because women are humans with feelings and cannot ignore their sexual needs. Moreover, it is natural that a woman seeks to have a stable family with a husband and children and that gives her a sense of stability and comfort. The second

choice is to have sex out of marriage and to satisfy her natural desires through sexual relations with one man or more and bear the very bad consequences of that which include committing the sin of fornication, having illegal children and taking the responsibility of rearing them alone as no obligations are placed among their illegal fathers. In many cases, unmarried mothers who do not have husbands and families satisfy their needs by sleeping with numerous men which is an act of humiliation for women. Sex-related diseases such as aids, herpes and others spread in Western communities while they very rare in the Muslim communities. Moreover, the great value of modesty is lost in such communities.

Polygamy allows the surplus number of woman to be married and to enjoy the stable life of a family in addition to having children along with all the benefits of marriage. In Islam, the men who marry more than one wife have to treat them equally.

16. Divorce

The firm union of the husband and wife is a necessary condition for a happy family life. However, in unfortunate circumstances the matrimonial contract faces some obstacles and couples find themselves going for the choice of divorce when they feel that it is impossible for them to live together anymore. In Islam, divorce is considered as an exception to the status of marriage. Although a Muslim man has the right to divorce his wife, this does not mean that a man can divorce his wife for a trivial or simple reason. In some cases, the wife may divorce her husband and this is called *Khula*. Divorce is strictly regulated in Islam. There are three types of divorce in Islam: Revocable divorce, irrevocable divorce and permanently irrevocable divorce.

The Revocable divorce is that type of divorce where the husband divorces his wife in clear and explicit terms. The wife becomes divorced and she has to sit in the *Iddah* (waiting period)¹. The *Iddah* will be three menstrual cycles if she experiences menses, three months if she does not experience menses or at child birth if she is pregnant. The husband now has the choice of revoking his divorce before the expiry of the *Iddah* period. But if the husband does not

1 ***iddah*** or ***iddat*** (Arabic: العدة; *period of waiting*) is the period a woman must observe after the death of her husband or after a divorce, during which she may not marry another man. One of its main purposes is to remove any doubt as to the paternity of a child born after the divorce or death of the prior husband.

revoke the divorce during the *Iddah* period, the divorce becomes irrevocable. Now, if he wishes to take her back, he can only do so by performing a new marriage contract.

Irrevocable divorce happens when the husband uses ambiguous or vague words to divorce his wife. In other words, he uses such words which could mean divorce or which could also mean something else. For example, when the husband says his to wife "Pack your bags and get out" or he says "You are no more my wife". In these cases where vague words are used, "Irrevocable divorce" will only take place if the husband has the intention of divorce at the time of uttering these words. If he merely uttered these words out of anger or he had some other meaning besides divorce in mind, divorce will not take place. Once the husband has issued one or two "Irrevocable divorces", the marriage turned to be broken and she has to sit in *Iddah*. If the husband wishes to take back his wife, a new marriage contract will have to be performed.

Permanently irrevocable divorce occurs when the husband issues three divorces to his wife. Once the husband issues his wife with three divorces, their marriage is completely broken. She cannot marry him until the wife completes her *Iddah*, thereafter she marries another man and consummates her marriage with him. The second husband then divorces her or passes away. She again has to

observe her *Iddah* from this second marriage. After this, she may again marry her first husband.

Nonetheless, Christian couples cannot divorce in the abovementioned sense but they can go for separation when their life reaches a point that it is impossible to live together. The Church believes that marriage is a permanent union. When two people marry, they form an unbreakable bond. The Church does not recognize a civil divorce because the State cannot dissolve what is indissoluble. The Church permits a physical separation of the spouses and living apart, but the two spouses still remain married until an annulment is granted (if applicable). There is a big difference between the two cases. A divorced Catholic who would like to remarry in the Catholic Church will need to obtain an annulment unless his/her former spouse has died. On the other hand, Muslim couples can remarry and restart a new life. In the case of the Christianity, couples have no right to divorce and this case has some consequences. First, the number of unmarried women will increase. In addition, social and family-related problems are likely to take place especially if they have children. For Christians, divorce is a dilemma, but for Muslims the door is still open for the couple to reunite, or to seek marriage from another person. By doing so, the concept of a family is protected and the two spouses are saved from going into adultery as they will satisfy their natural desires within a legal relationship.

17. Clothing

Muslims are required to pay attention to their appearance, making sure that their clothing is beautiful and clean, especially when dealing with others and when performing the prayers. Allah, Exalted be He, says in the Holy Quran: **“O children of Adam, dress well for every prayer. Eat and drink, but do not waste, for He does not like the wasteful.”** (Al-A’raf: 31)

Allah has permitted people to wear nice clothes and urge them to maintain good appearance, as doing so is one aspect of remembering Allah’s blessings upon them. Allah,

Exalted be He, says in another ayah in the Holy Quran: **“Say, “Who has forbidden the adornments and lawful provisions that Allah has brought forth for His slaves?” Say, “They are for the believers in the life of this world, and they will be exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection. This is how We make the verses clear for people who have knowledge.”** (Al-A’raf: 32)

Islam is a religion which lays down rules based on the dictates of the pure nature innate in all humans (*fitrah*), straightforward reasoning, and sound logic.

The general rule in the Islamic law is that all types of clothing and adornment are allowed. Indeed, while it outlines a code of modesty, Islam does not require Muslims to wear a certain type of clothing. It considers all types of clothing lawful as long as such clothing serves the required purposes without exceeding the bounds set by Islam in this respect.

The Prophet, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, wore the same type of clothes prevalent in his time and did not order people to wear a particular type of clothing. He only warned them against certain qualities relating to clothing, for the general rule in Islamic Law regarding dealings in general, including clothing, is that everything is allowed unless there is evidence stating otherwise. The Prophet, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, said,

“Eat, drink, dress and give charity, but without extravagance or arrogance.” (Sunan Al-Nasa’i)

Clothing serves a number of purposes. It covers the parts of the body which must be covered in public, following the standards of modesty which are innate in all human beings:

“O children of Adam, We have given you garments that cover your private parts and as an adornment. However, the garment of piety - that is best. That is one of the signs of Allah, so that they may take heed.” (Al-A’raf: 26) It also covers the body against heat, cold and harm in general. Describing the benefits of clothing which Allah has provided for His servants, Allah, Exalted be He, says: **“Allah has made for you shade out of what He has created, and has made for you shelter in the mountains. He has also made for you garments protecting you from heat [and cold], and garments [of armor] protecting you in battle. This is how He perfects His favors upon you, so that you may submit to Him.”** (An-Nahl: 81).

The great purpose of protecting women’s modesty is stated in this ayah of the Holy Quran, **“ Tell the believing women to lower their gazes and guard their private parts, and not to reveal their beauty except what appears. And let them draw their veils over their chests, and not to reveal their beauty except to their**

husbands, their fathers, their fathers-in-law, their sons, their stepsons, their brothers, their brothers' sons or sisters' sons, their fellow women, slaves whom they own, male attendants who have no [sexual] desire, or children who are still unaware of private aspects of women. Nor let them stamp their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden charm. And turn to Allah in repentance all together, O believers, so that you may be successful.” (An-Noor: 31)

The ayah mentions the people before whom a woman is exempted from veiling. It includes the men whom she cannot be married to according to Islamic law. Also, another ayah states the ruling for the aged women: **“As for elderly women who have no interest in marriage, there is no blame on them if they take off their outer garments without revealing their beauty. But if they modestly refrain from it, that is better for them. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.” (An-Noor: 60)**

A lot of argument is taking place in the West regarding wearing the *hijab* (A term often used to mean scarf or outer garment that Muslim women wear, but in Arabic it means a 'cover' or 'screen') by Muslim women. In this sense, Western women have gone far beyond the limits of modesty in their way of clothing that reveals parts of their bodies which Allah ordered them to cover. Unlike those that look at the matter as an act of personal freedom, Islam sees that

the clothes that many of them wear actually humiliate them as their bodies are exposed to anybody rather than their husbands and their unmarriageable relatives. The prophets including Muhammad and Jesus, peace be upon them, came to enhance good manners and would have never approved these acts. Wearing the revealing clothes plays a big role in increasing of crimes especially rape and adultery.

Women's Dress code

These conditions of *hijab* for a woman are to be observed in public and amongst non-mahram (unmarriageable) men. As long as these conditions are fulfilled, a woman may wear whatever she pleases.

1. The *hijab* must conceal the entire body except the face and the hands.
2. It should not be translucent or tight. Tight clothes, even if they conceal the color of the skin, they still describe the size and shape of the body or part of it and create vivid images.
3. It should not attract the attention of the opposite gender; thus it should not be extravagant or excessively opulent. Nor should jewelry and makeup be on display.
4. It should not be a garment worn because of vanity or to gain popularity or fame.
5. It should not be perfumed. This prohibition applies to both the body and the clothes.

6. It should not resemble the clothing worn by men.
7. It should not resemble the clothing that is specific to the non-Muslims.

Men's Dress code

Although they are sometimes overlooked or not well understood, there are conditions of dress code for men as well. Some of the conditions are the same as the conditions for women but others relate particularly to men.

1. The part of the body from the navel to the knees should be covered.
2. It should not resemble the clothing that is specific to the non-Muslims. Western clothing that does not represent a certain group or sect is normally permitted.
3. It should not resemble the clothing worn by women.
4. It should not be tight or see-through.
5. Two types of adornment are forbidden to men but permitted for women. These are, gold and clothing made of pure silk.

The scholars of Islam overwhelmingly agree that for men everything between the navel and the knees (including the knees) must be covered in the presence of anybody. The only exception to this is a man in the presence of his wife.

18. Eating and Drinking Etiquette

Islam prescribes a set of dietary guidelines for its believers to follow. In general, Islamic dietary law distinguishes between food and drink that are allowed (*halal*) and those that are prohibited (*haram*). These rules serve to bond followers together as part of a cohesive group and serve to establish a unique Islamic identity. Muslims

are allowed to eat what is "good" Allah, the Exalted, says, **"O people, eat from what is lawful and good on earth and do not follow the footsteps of Satan, for he is your sworn enemy."** (Al-Baqarah: 168) that is, food and drink identified as pure, clean, wholesome, nourishing and pleasing to the taste. In general, everything is allowed (*halal*) except what has been specifically prohibited. Regarding the prohibited foods, as indicated in the previous ayah, this means that Islam has prohibited only what is impure and harmful. The following ayah of the Holy Quran states a group of prohibited food: **"Forbidden to you are carrion, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which is sacrificed to other than Allah; and that which is killed by strangling, or by a violent blow, or by a headlong fall, or by being gored; and that which is partly eaten by a predator unless you slaughter it [before it dies]; and that which is sacrificed to idols."** (Al- Mā'idah:3) Under certain circumstances, the "law of necessity" allows prohibited acts to occur if no viable alternative exists. For example, in an instance of possible starvation, it would be considered non-sinful to consume otherwise prohibited food or drink if no *halal* alternative was available. The previous ayah continues to say: **"But if anyone is compelled by severe hunger, not intending to sin, then Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful."** (Al-Mā'idah: 3) The meat and by-products of animals not slain

in this way are prohibited. Also, eating the flesh of carnivorous animals is prohibited.

The rules for how allowed food animals are slaughtered are to be followed in detail. Muslims slaughter their livestock by slitting the animal's throat in a swift and merciful manner, reciting "In the name of Allah, Allah is the Most Great." The animal should not suffer in any way, and should not see the blade before slaughter. The knife must be razor sharp to ensure it dies quickly, and it should be free from any blood of a previous slaughter. All of the animal's blood must be drained before consumption. These rules do not apply to fish or other aquatic meat sources, which are all regarded as *halal*. On the other hand, all kinds of intoxicating (alcoholic) drinks such as beer, wine, and spirits are prohibited. the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said: **"Every intoxicant is unlawful and whatever causes intoxication in large amounts, a small amount of it is (also) unlawful."** (Sunan Ibn Majah) Islam aims to root out all evils to ensure that society remains healthy and peaceful. Islam also forbids the taking of drugs except for medical purposes. Fruits and vegetables are lawful in Islam.

As for the Etiquette of eating and drinking, Muslims should begin meals by reciting: "In the name of Allah, and finish by reciting the supplication: "All praise is for Allah who gave us to eat and to drink and made us Muslims." We

are asked to eat with the right hand and to wash our hands before and after our meals. It is better not to eat so much so as to not fill the stomach. The Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said: **"No man fills a container worse than his stomach. A few morsels that keep his back upright are sufficient for him. If he has to, then he should keep one-third for food, one-third for drink and one-third for his breathing."** (Al-Tirmidhi) The Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, also asked us not to drink water and other soft drinks in one go; rather, we should pause while drinking and it is better to have three pauses.

The food of the Jews and Christians is permissible for Muslims. Allah says: **"Today all good things have been made lawful to you. As the food of the people of the Book is lawful to you, and your food is lawful to them."** (Al- Mā'idah: 5)

19. How to Embrace Islam

The main message of all the prophets has always been that there is only One True God - Allah - and He alone is to be worshipped. Allah, the Almighty, says in the Holy Quran, **“We never sent before you [O Prophet] any messenger without revealing to him that none has the right to be worshiped except Me, so worship Me.”** (Al- Anbiya': 25)

Having been convinced that Islam is the only true religion and it is the right path to Allah, one should embrace Islam and be prepared to do what all Muslims do and abandon all what Allah, the Almighty, and Prophet Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, have forbidden. They must testify that there is no deity truly worshiped except Allah alone, and Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, is his messenger.

The word “Muslim” means one who submits to the will of Allah, the Almighty, regardless of his/her race, nationality

or ethnic background. Hence, any person who is ready to submit to the will of Allah, the Almighty, is eligible to become a Muslim.

Once a person has converted to Islam, he/she sets a personal and direct relationship with Allah by worshipping Him alone, without the need of intermediaries. One feels this personal relationship and is aware that Allah knows everything and is there to assist him/her. Also a person realizes the true purpose of his or her life, which is to recognize Allah and follow His commandments. This provides that person with a light which guides him/her through life as the religion of Islam has answers to all situations, and one will always know the right steps to take in all aspects of life. In Islam, one finds true happiness, tranquility, and inner peace.

Finally, upon converting to Islam, all of one's previous sins are forgiven, and one starts a new life of piety and righteousness. As a Muslim, when one makes a mistake thereafter, he/she can always repent to Allah who forgives the sins of those who repent to Him sincerely. There are no intermediaries or created beings to make confessions to and one achieves salvation from Hellfire and wins the reward of eternal Paradise promised by Allah. To convert to Islam and become a Muslim is a simple and easy process. All that is required is to say a sentence called the Testimony of Faith (Shahada), which is pronounced as:

“Ash-hadu ann lā ’ilāha ’illa Allāh, wa ash-hadu anna Muḥammadan rasūlu Allāh.” I testify that there is no deity truly worshiped except Allah alone, and I testify that Muhammad, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, is His servant and messenger. Afterwards, the person takes a full bath (*ghusl*) and later males have to do the circumcision.

In conclusion, by embracing Islam, a person submits to the order of Allah and achieves the pleasure of his Creator, the One, Who says, **“Anyone who seeks a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted from him; and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers.”** (Al-Imran: 85) By converting to Islam, a person yields the following benefits among many others:

- Converting to Islam exempts from submission to systems and ways of life, invented and imposed by man.
- Converting to Islam allows a person to truly experience Allah’s love Who says, “Say, **“If you love Allah then follow me; Allah will love you and forgive you your sins: for Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”** (Al Imran: 31)
- Allah the Most High promises Paradise to the believers. Allah, the Almighty, says, **“As for those who believe and do righteous deeds, We will surely accommodate them in mansions of Paradise under which rivers**

flow, abiding therein forever. How excellent is the reward of those who work [righteousness]!”

(Al-‘Ankabūt: 58)

- Happiness, tranquility and inner peace can be achieved by converting to Islam. Allah, the Almighty, says, **“Those who believe and whose hearts find tranquility in the remembrance of Allah, for indeed in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find tranquility.”**
(Al-Ra’d: 28)

- In Islam, a person finds the answers to all important life questions. Islam denotes the clear purpose of life. Allah, the Almighty, says, **“I have not created the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”** (Al- Dhāriyāt: 56)

- By accepting Islam, we transform all aspect of life into acts of worship. Islam is given for the benefit of mankind, which will last until the Day of Judgment. Islam is a full-fledged way of life, and not something that is practiced only on holidays, weekends, etc. The believer is connected with Allah twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Acts of worship cover all aspects: spiritual, emotional, physical.

- By accepting Islam, a person gains the mercy of Allah and His forgiveness. Often a person feels lost and lonely. At such times he cries out to God, seeking His help, mercy and forgiveness. When a person is sincere in conversion, the Lord grants him peace, and the person sees the

expression of divine mercy in his surroundings. The Lord forgives him of all previous sins, for His mercy knows no bounds. The soul of a Muslim convert is as pure as a newborn's.

- Conversion to Islam teaches us that difficulties and tests are part of being human. Having accepted Islam, a person begins to understand that trials, hardships, and good luck are not an accident, but part of Allah's divine decree and predestination. Allah, the Almighty, says, **"We will surely test you with something of fear and famine, and loss of property, lives and fruits. But give glad tidings to those who are patient. Those when afflicted with a disaster, they say, "We belong to Allah, and to Him we will return. They are those upon whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and it is they who are guided"** (Al-Baqarah: 155- 157)

20. Arabic: The Language of the Holy Quran

Arabic, a Semitic language that is thousands of years old, is known as the one and only language of the Holy Quran and the official language of Arab countries. Although Prophet Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, is sent to the whole world, he is primarily an Arab and was sent as a messenger to an Arab community. So, it is natural that the Message he came with – the Holy Quran- is in the language of his people. Allah, exalted be He, says, **“If We had made it a non-Arabic Qur'an, they would have said, “If only its verses were made clear? What! A non-Arabic [book] and an Arab [messenger]?” Say, “It is a guidance and healing for those who believe. As for those who do not believe, there is deafness in their ears and they are blind to [understand] it - it is as if they are being called from a far off place.”** (Fussilat: 44)

Despite the fact the during the pre-Islamic era, the Arabs in the Arabian Peninsula were highly skilled in Arabic with the most advanced language amongst world languages in terms of eloquence, literature and fluency, the Holy

Quran's literary style stunned all of the poets and language experts of the time.

Allah, Exalted be He, also says: **"A Book whose verses are well explained; an Arabic Qur'an for people who understand."** (Fussilat: 3) Allah, Exalted be He, also says: **"We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an so that you may understand."** (Yusuf: 2)

The Quranic world view is closely tied to the Arabic language which belongs to the Semitic family of languages. The Holy Quran defines itself specifically as an 'Arabic scripture'. Arabic is from the Religion, and the knowledge of it is an obligation. For surely the understanding of the Holy Quran and the *Sunnah* is an obligation, and these two are not understood except with the understanding of Arabic, and whatever obligation is not fulfilled except by certain steps then those steps themselves become obligatory (to fulfil the initial obligation).

The internal logic of Semitic languages is very different from that of Indo-European languages such as English, Latin and Persian. Every Arabic word may be traced back to a verbal root consisting of three, four or five consonants from which are derived up to twelve different verbal modes, together with a number of nouns and adjectives. Without understanding the meanings and the related concepts of the Arabic words, it is almost impossible to appreciate the

richness of the associated meanings as it is difficult to translate certain words into English.

The Arabic alphabet consists of 28 letters and it is written from right to left. It has a very large vocabulary base. Arabic is spoken by 300 million Arab people in addition to hundreds of millions of Muslims all over the world. It is one of the official languages of the United Nations. The Holy Quran can only be recited in Arabic while only the meaning can be translated into other languages.

Translations of the Holy Quran are mainly meant for informing the people who have not yet embraced Islam to make clear to them the principles of Islam and the teachings of Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, and to know its exact facts. When they reach this state and Allah has blessed them with Islam, they have to take the Quranic and the Messenger's language as the only language to understand Islam. It is a must to recite the Holy Quran in Arabic during the prayers.

Moreover, the sphere of influence enjoyed by this language is actually much larger. Islamic civilization has crossed every border and has become part of every culture on the planet. The organic link of the Arabic language to Islam elevated it to the *lingua franca*, or common language, of the Islamic world.

21. Hijri Calendar- the Islamic Calendar

The Islamic Hijri calendar was created during the rule of the Muslim Caliph, Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, who recognized the necessity of a calendar to govern the affairs of the Muslims and as a means to mark the day Prophet Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, and his companions immigrated from Makkah to Al-Madina

city where the first Islamic state started and carried Islam to the whole world.

At that time, as Islam started to spread rapidly, Persia used a different calendar from Syria. Egypt used yet another. Each of these calendars had a different starting point, or epoch. The Persians used June 16, AD 632, the date of the accession of the last Sasanid monarch. Syria, which until the Muslim conquest was part of the Byzantine Empire, used a form of the Roman "Julian" calendar, with an epoch of October 1, 312 BC . Egypt used the Coptic calendar, with an epoch of August 29, AD 284. Although all were solar, and hence geared to the seasons and containing 365 days, each also had a different system for periodically adding days to compensate for the fact that the true length of the solar year is not 365 but 365.2422 days.

There were two other reasons for Caliph Umar to reject the existing solar calendars. The Holy Quran states that time should be reckoned by the moon as it came in an Ayah of the Holy Quran, **"It is He Who made the sun a radiant light and the moon a reflected light, and precisely determined its phases, so that you may know the number of years and account [of time]. Allah has not created all of this except for a true purpose. He makes the signs clear for people who know."** (Yūnus: 5)

Not only that, calendars used by the Persians, Syrians and Egyptians were identified with other religions and

cultures. He therefore decided to create a calendar specifically for the Muslim community. It would be lunar, and it would have 12 months, each with 29 or 30 days. This completely goes in harmony with the Islamic culture and religion. Several Islamic rites are closely connected to the lunar calendar such as observing the fast of the month of Ramadan and performing pilgrimage to Makkah as the Holy Quran states, **“They ask you about the phases of the moon. Say, “They are a means for people to determine time and pilgrimage.”** (Al-Baqarah: 189). Also, it is stipulated by the Prophet in several Hadiths, that the Hijri month begins with the visibility of the new moon. The Prophet, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, said **“We are an illiterate community. We neither write nor count. The months are sometimes like this and sometimes like that, i.e. sometimes with 29 days and sometimes with 30.”** (Al-Bukhari)

In another, Hadith, the Prophet, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, said **“Fast when you see the crescent and finish fasting when you see the crescent. If you do not perceive it, complete the month of *Sha’ban* to 30 days.”** (Al-Bukhari)

The first year in the Hijri calendar corresponds to 622 A.D. in the Gregorian calendar. It is a purely lunar calendar whose time reckoning is tied to the Moon phases. Each month lasts for a full lunation, which is the time span

from one New Moon to the next. This Moon cycle encompasses all the phases of the Moon. It consists of 12 months in a year of 354 or 355 days that are based on the motion of the moon.

Because of this, the Islamic calendar is consistently shorter than a tropical year, and therefore it shifts with respect to the Gregorian calendar. This shift means that the worshipping practices that are determined according to the lunar calendar, such as the fasting in Ramadan and the pilgrimage to Makkah, come during all the year round. That is because the lunar year is about 11 days shorter than the solar year, the fasting in Ramadan can come all the year round, in summer, autumn, winter and spring. The same is true for the pilgrimage to Makkah.

The number of the months of the year is mentioned in the Holy Quran as Allah, Exalted be He, says: **“The number of months with Allah is twelve, in the Record of Allah since the day He created the heavens and earth.”** (Al-Tawbah: 36)

The Islamic calendar is the official calendar in countries around the Arabian Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia. But other Muslim countries use the Gregorian calendar for civil purposes and only turn to the Islamic calendar for religious purposes.

22. Economy

Islamic economic system is neither socialist nor capitalist, but it is an ideal mean with none of the drawbacks of the other two systems. It contributes to reducing the gap between the rich and the poor and to enhancing prosperity by such means as the discouraging of the hoarding of wealth, taxing wealth (through *Zakat*), discouraging of hoarding of food for speculation and other activities that Islam regards as sinful such as unlawful confiscation of land. The central features of the Islamic economic systems are often summarized as:

- The "behavioral norms and moral foundations" must comply with the principles derived from these fundamental sources of Islam - the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him.

- Collection of Zakat: Paying the Zakat- the "charitable taxing of certain assets, such as currency, gold, or harvest, with an eye to allocating these taxes to eight expenditures that are also explicitly defined in the Holy Quran, such as aid to those in need. The amount of money given as Zakat is regulated in detail in a perfect system. Allah, Exalted be He, says: **"Alms [zakah] is only for the poor and the needy; those in charge of it; those whose hearts may be attracted [to Islam]; for freeing those in bondage; for those in debt; for the cause of Allah; and for [the stranded] traveler - as ordained by Allah, for Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise."** (Al-Tawbah : 60)
- Prohibition of *Riba* (any kind of interest that is referred to as usury) charged on loans in any way. Allah has strictly forbidden *Riba* in more than one ayah. Allah says: **"Those who consume usury will not stand [on the Day of Resurrection] except like those being beaten by Satan. That is because they say, "Trade is just like usury." But Allah has permitted trade and forbidden usury. Whoever desists because of receiving admonition from his Lord may keep his past gains, and his case is left to Allah. But whoever returns to it, they are the people of the Fire; they will abide therein**

forever.” (Al-Baqarah: 275) In another ayah, Allah says: **“Allah destroys usury and nourishes charities, and Allah does not like any ungrateful sinner.”** (Al-Baqarah: 276) Allah, the Almighty, also says, **“O you who believe, do not consume usury, doubled and multiplied. And fear Allah, so that you may succeed.”** (Al-Imran: 130)

- Prohibition of *Qimar* (gambling). Allah says: **“O you who believe, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters and divining arrows are of Satan’s evil work; therefore avoid such [evil], so that you may be successful.”** (Al- Mā’idah: 90)
- Establishment of the overriding doctrine of fairness in commercial dealings. Allah, the Almighty, says in the Holy Quran: **“Give full measure when you measure, and weigh with accurate scales; that is fair and best in the end.”** (Al- Isrā: 35)
- Writing down the debts in detail with the presence of witnesses. This is highly stressed and detailed in the longest ayah in the Holy Quran as Allah, the Almighty, says, **“O you who believe, when you contract a debt among yourselves for a fixed period of time, write it down, and let the scribe write it between you with fairness. The scribe whom Allah has taught should not refuse to write, so let him write, and let the debtor dictate, but he should**

fear Allah his Lord, and not diminish anything out of it. If the debtor is feeble-minded, weak, or unable to dictate, then let his guardian dictate fairly, and bring two witnesses from among your men; if two men are not available, then one man and two women from those whom you accept as witnesses - so that if one of them forgets, the other can remind her. The witnesses should not refuse when they are summoned. Do not be reluctant to write down your debts, whether the amount is small or large, for a fixed period of time; that is more equitable in the sight of Allah, and more supportive as evidence, and more likely to prevent doubts among yourselves. However, if you are conducting a transaction on the spot between yourselves, there is no blame upon you not to write it, but take witnesses whenever you trade with one another. Neither a scribe nor a witness should suffer harm, for if you do cause them harm, it is indeed a sin on your part. So fear Allah, for it is Allah Who teaches you, and Allah is All-Knowing of everything.” (Al-Baqarah: 282). The ayah that follows continues the related rulings: “If you are on a journey and find no scribe, then something should be taken as collateral. But if you trust one another, then the debtor should

fulfill his trust, and let him fear Allah, his Lord. Do not conceal the testimony, for anyone who conceals it has a sinful heart, and Allah is All-Knowing of what you do.” (Al-Baqarah: 283)

- Prohibition of deception in trade such as the concealment of some defect or adulteration of some inferior quality merchandise in a superior one. Islam absolutely forbids cheating and deception whether Muslims or non-Muslims are involved. It came in the Hadith of the Prophet, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, narrated by Imam Muslim: **“The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, happened to pass by a heap of corn. He thrust his hand in that (heap) and his fingers felt wetness. He said to the owner of that heap of corn, “What is this?” He replied: “O Messenger of Allah! These have been drenched by rainfall.” He remarked, “Why did you not place this (the drenched part of the heap) over the corn so that people might see it? He who deceives is none of us.”** “He is none of us” means “He is not following the way of Muslims” or “His conduct is unlike that of Muslims.” It is therefore, necessary for every Muslim to abstain from such evils. Another Prohibited deception is practicing *Najsh* in trade: The Prophet, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, said: **“Do not practice *Najsh*.”** (Sahih Al-

Bukhari and Muslim) *Najsh* means to offer a high price for something in order to allure another customer who is interested in the thing. If a person has no intention of purchasing a thing which is being auctioned, one should not give a higher bid for it because its genuine customer will be deceived by it, and he will purchase it at a higher price. This is also a form of deceit which must be strictly avoided.

- The prohibition of *Gharar*. The Arabic word *Gharar* is a fairly broad concept that literally means deceit, risk, fraud, uncertainty or hazard that might lead to destruction or loss. *Gharar* in Islam refers to any transaction of probable objects whose existence or description are not certain, due to lack of information and knowledge of the ultimate outcome of the contract or the nature and quality of the subject matter of it. By prohibition of *Gharar*, Islam seeks to protect the different parties from deceit and ignorance in any commercial exchange contracts that are not free from hazard, risk or speculation about the essential elements in the transaction to either party, or uncertainty of the ability of one party to honor its rights and obligations. It requires that all Islamic financial and business transactions must be based on transparency, accuracy, and disclosure of all necessary information so that no one party has

advantages over the other party. The rationale behind the prohibition of *Gharar* is to ensure full consent and satisfaction of the parties in a contract. For example, the Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, has forbidden the purchase of the unborn animal in the mother's womb, the sale of the milk in the udder without measurement, the purchase of spoils of war prior to distribution, the purchase of charities prior to their receipt, and the purchase of the catch of a diver.

- Prohibition of dealing with *Haram* (unlawful) items such as swine, wine drugs, intoxicants...etc.
- Prohibition of giving short measure. Allah, Exalted be He, says: **"Give full measure and weight with justice."** (Al- An'ām: 152) In another Ayah, Allah, the Almighty, says, **"He raised the heaven and enjoined justice, so that you may not transgress the limits of justice. Therefore, establish weights in justice, and do not give short measure."** (Al- Rahman: 7- 9)

There are many other rules that regulate the process of selling and buying but it is difficult to cover them all in this brief overview.

23. Civilization

The powerful impetus given by the Holy Quran to the study of nature and surrounding realities and the reflection and reasoning, for discovering the signs of Allah, transformed the early Muslims into ardent students and researchers. They traveled to all corners of the world in the quest for knowledge and took to the study of natural phenomena with religious fervor and commitment, observed nature carefully and undertook extensive experimentation to gain insight and understanding of the nature of things. They gratefully and freely accepted, assimilated, integrated and advanced the available accumulated scientific knowledge, wisdom and learning of the then existing civilizations. In the field of natural sciences, they made outstanding advances and achieved the greatest triumph. This upsurge of scientific activity among the early Muslims is an irrefutable proof of the inherently rational and empirical orientation of the Islamic ideology and world view. Modern science owes a great deal to this early effort of the great Muslim scientists and thinkers

Muslim scientists' unprecedented achievements have bridged the historical gap of science especially during the Dark Ages, or the Early Middle Ages, in Western Europe which were characterized by scientific, economic, intellectual, and cultural decline. On the other side, Islam's golden age in science, technology and intellectual culture

spanned about 500 years, from the ninth until the 14th centuries. Muslim achievements in these areas greatly influenced the European Renaissance of the 15th and 16th centuries, as well as the birth of modern scientific method in the 17th century.

Given the fact that today some people believe in an imminent “clash of civilizations” and a fundamental incompatibility between Islam and the West, it is worth remembering that the two civilizations do share a precious intellectual heritage. The west takes great pride in modern science as one of the greatest achievements of its intellect, an achievement no one should deny or belittle. Modern science could not have developed without the Renaissance. But without Islamic science and philosophy to build on, there would have been no Renaissance!

Bertrand Russell, the famous British philosopher, has rightly claimed it was Muslims “who introduced the empirical method” in the study of nature, and cultivated it widely when they were leaders of the civilized world. The scientific method, as it has been developed in modern western science, was indeed invented by Muslims and first practiced by them on a large scale. Muslim scientists then were not only Arabs, but also people of other racial and ethnic groups such as Persians, East Indians and Chinese.

Moreover, Islam has withstood the test of fourteen hundred years and has all the potentialities of establishing an ideal society as it did under the leadership of the last Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him. It was a miracle that Prophet Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, could bring even his toughest enemies to the fold of Islam without adequate material resources. Worshippers of idols, blind followers of the ways of forefathers, promoters of tribal feuds, and abusers of human dignity and blood became the most disciplined nation under the guidance of Islam and its Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him. Islam opened before them vistas of spiritual heights and human dignity by declaring righteousness as the sole criterion of merit and honor. Islam shaped their social, cultural, moral and commercial life with basic laws and principles which are in conformity with human nature and hence applicable in all times as human nature does not change.

Here we furnish some observations on Islam by acknowledged non-Muslim scholars of modern time. Truth needs no advocates to plead on its behalf, but the prolonged malicious propaganda against Islam has created great confusion even in the minds of free and objective thinkers. We hope that the following observations would contribute to initiating an objective evaluation of Islam.

Canon Taylor, Paper read before the Church Congress at Walverhamton, Oct. 7, 1887, Quoted by Arnond in *The Preaching of Islam*, pp. 71-72: *"It (Islam) replaced monkishness by manliness. It gives hope to the slave, brotherhood to mankind, and recognition of the fundamental facts of human nature."*

Sarojini Naidu, Lectures on "The Ideals of Islam", see Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu, Madras, 1918, p. 167: *"Sense of justice is one of the most wonderful ideals of Islam, because as I read in the Holy Quran I find those dynamic principles of life, not mystic but practical ethics for the daily conduct of life suited to the whole world."*

De Lacy O'Leary, *Islam at the Crossroads*, London, 1923, p.8: *"History makes it clear however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated."*

H.A.R. Gibb, *Whither Islam*, London, 1932, p. 379: *"But Islam has a still further service to render to the cause of humanity. It stands after all nearer to the real East than Europe does, and it possesses a magnificent tradition of inter-racial understanding and cooperation. No other society has such a record of success in uniting in an equality*

of status, of opportunity, and of endeavors so many and so various races of mankind... Islam has still the power to reconcile apparently irreconcilable elements of race and tradition. If ever the opposition of the great societies of East and West is to be replaced by cooperation, the mediation of Islam is an indispensable condition. In its hands lies very largely the solution of the problem with which Europe is faced in its relation with East. If they unite, the hope of a peaceful issue is immeasurably enhanced. But if Europe, by rejecting the cooperation of Islam, throws it into the arms of its rivals, the issue can only be disastrous for both."

G.B. Shaw, *The Genuine Islam*, Vol. 1, No. 81936: *"I have always held the religion of Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phase of existence which can make itself appeal to every age. I have studied him – the wonderful man and in my opinion far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the Savior of Humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it the much needed peace and happiness: I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, that it would be acceptable to the*

Europe of tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today."

W. Montgomery Watt, *Islam and Christianity Today*, London, 1983, p.IX: *"I am not a Muslim in the usual sense, though I hope I am a "Muslim" as "one surrendered to God", but I believe that embedded in the Quran and other expressions of the Islamic vision are vast stores of divine truth from which I and other occidentals have still much to learn, and 'Islam is certainly a strong contender for the supplying of the basic framework of the one religion of the future."*

Paul Varo Martinson (editor), *ISLAM, An Introduction for Christians*, Augsburg, Minneapolis, 1994, p. 205: *"Islam is an authentic faith that shapes our Muslim neighbors' innermost being and determines their attitude in life. And the Islamic faith is generally more tradition oriented than the recent Western shape of Christian faith, which has experienced considerable secularization. Yet we are only fair to the Islamic population when we understand them from their religious core and respect them as a faith community. Muslims have become important partners in faith conversation."*

A.J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, New York, 1948, p. 205: *"The extinction of race consciousness as between*

Muslims is one of the outstanding achievements of Islam and in the contemporary world. There is, as it happens, a crying need for the propagation of this Islamic virtue."

John Alden Williams (editor), *ISLAM*, George Braziller, New York, 1962, inside dust cover: *"Islam is much more than a formal religion: it is an integral way of life. In many ways it is a more determining factor in the experience of its followers than any other world religion. The Muslim ("One who submits") lives face to face with God at all times and will introduce no separation between his life and his religion, his politics and his faith. With its strong emphasis on the brotherhood of men cooperating to fulfill the will of God, Islam has become one of the most influential religions in the world today."*

24. Racism and Discrimination

The Muslims are united as one nation, not by blood, nor color nor race but by following the same religion. This bond of faith is what causes the brotherhood between the believers, as Allah, Exalted be He, says, **“The believers are but brothers, so make peace between your brothers. And fear Allah, so that you may be shown mercy.”** (Al-Hujurāt: 10) The Messenger, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, said: **“A Muslim to another Muslim is a brother; he does not forsake him nor oppress him.”** **“The similitude of the Muslims is like one body, if one part suffers, the other feels the pain.”** Islam has all the keys necessary to defeat racism from society and leave no room for such kinds of discrimination.

This is simply because it teaches that there is no distinction in terms of a person’s color or race. In fact the only purpose our different races and cultures serve in Islam

is for us to build bridges in getting to know one another. As Allah clearly mentions in the Holy Quran, **“O people, We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may recognize one another. Indeed, the most noble of you before Allah is the most righteous among you. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.”** (Al-Hujurāt: 13). This means, that such diversity is not a means of discrimination but rather a means of education.

The color of our skin and all of our unique cultural features are God-given traits that none of us chose to inherit at birth. The differences we share are in fact all signs of the magnificence of Allah, Exalted be He, and a reflection of His infinite creative power as He mentions in the Holy Quran. It is not through such characteristics that we realize the greatness of ourselves, but rather we realize and appreciate the greatness of the One who created us. Allah, Exalted be He, says: **“And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth, and the diversity of your tongues and colors. Indeed, there are signs in this for those who have knowledge.”** (Ar-Rūm: 22)

Allah, the Almighty, has created all human beings from the same thing – dirt. So it makes no sense to consider ourselves better than one another when we are all designed from the same components, regardless of our different cultures. Abu Musa reported that the Messenger of Allah,

may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said: **"Verily, Allah Exalted be He, created Adam from a handful which He took from the earth, so the children of Adam come in accordance with the earth. Some come with red skin, white skin, or black skin."** (Al-Tirmidhi)

In the eyes of Allah, the Almighty, our skin color or race grants us no favors, rather it is simply our actions and deeds that make all the difference. In the Prophet's farewell sermon, he made this point very clear when he stated that white skin is not better than black skin, nor is black skin better than white skin. Rather, it is our righteousness that makes the difference.

The Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said, **"O people, your Lord is One; and your father Adam is one. There is no virtue of an Arab over a foreigner (non-Arab) nor a foreigner over an Arab, and neither white skin over black skin, nor black skin over white skin, except by righteousness. Have I not delivered the message?"** (Musnad Ahmad)

While we may all come from different nationalities, cultures, and backgrounds, at the end of the day our overarching identity as Muslims dictates that we are all servants of Allah, the Almighty. There is no superior race or culture; we are all equal servants of Allah, the Almighty, who are in as much need of Allah, the Almighty, as everyone else.

In Islam it is prohibited to boast about our race or culture to the extent that it belittles or denigrates people from other cultures. The Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, warned us all about the dangers of such discrimination. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said: **"He is not one of us who calls to tribalism. He is not one of us who fights for the sake of tribalism. He is not one of us who dies following the way of tribalism."** (Sunan Abu Dawud)

The religion is the strongest bond of brotherhood among all Muslims. Therefore, one never hears of any Muslim-related racial organizations or ideologies such as Zionism, Skinheads, or Nazism. Moreover, the blacks in Africa suffered severely under European colonialism which enslaved millions of them and massacred many others. They even transferred them to Europe and America for the worst slavery ever known to man. Even after forcing them to Christianity, they are still discriminated against because they are black or colored. The same thing happened to other races, like the Red Indians in America and the Aborigines in Australia, who become almost extinct. Islam stands firmly against racial discrimination because it considers all humans are the same and come from the same father and mother, Adam and Eve.

25. Human Rights in Islam

Islam gave to mankind an ideal code of human rights. The international convention of human rights, which the world reached after the long suffering of humanity throughout ages, especially during the Second World War, can be traced back to Islamic faith over fourteen centuries ago.

There are many Ayat in the Holy Quran that point to the dignity, equality, and brotherhood of humankind. Furthermore, Allah, the Almighty, makes it clear that rights and freedoms are granted to all, regardless of race, gender, social origin, nationality, language, color, or status.

These rights aim at conferring honor and dignity on mankind and eliminating exploitation, oppression and injustice. Human rights in Islam are firmly rooted in the belief that Allah, the Almighty, and Allah alone, is the Law Giver and the Source of all human rights. Due to their Divine origin, no ruler, government, assembly or authority can curtail or violate in any way the human rights conferred by Allah, the Almighty, nor can they be surrendered. Human rights in Islam are an integral part of the overall Islamic order and it is obligatory on all Muslim governments and

organs of society to implement them in letter and in spirit within the framework of that order.

The life and property of all citizens in an Islamic state are considered sacred, whether a person is a Muslim or not. Islam also protects honor. So, in Islam, insulting others or making fun of them is not allowed. Prophet Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said: **"Truly your blood, your property, and your honor are inviolable."** (Al-Bukhari) Racism is not allowed in Islam, for the Holy Quran speaks of human equality in the following terms: **"O people, We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may recognize one another. Indeed, the most noble of you before Allah is the most righteous among you. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware."** (Al-Hujurāt: 13)

The developed world can send a man to the moon but cannot stop man from hating and fighting his fellow brother. Ever since the days of Prophet Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, Islam has provided a vivid example of how racism can be ended. The annual pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to Makkah shows the real Islamic brotherhood of all races and nations, when several millions of Muslims from all over the world come to Makkah to perform the pilgrimage wearing the same humble clothes

regardless of their social status, racial origin or being rulers or ruled.

Islam is a religion of justice. Allah, Exalted be He, says: **“Indeed, Allah commands you to return trusts to their owners, and when you judge between people, judge with justice. What an excellent exhortation from Allah to you! Indeed, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.”** (Al-Nisa’: 58) Allah, Exalted be He, also says: **“...and be just, for Allah loves those who are just.”** (Al-Hujurāt: 9) We should even be just with those who we hate, as Allah says: **“O you who believe, stand firm for Allah by bearing true testimony, and do not let the hatred of a people lead you away from justice. Be just; that is closer to righteousness. And fear Allah, for Allah is All-Aware of what you do.”** (Al-Mā’idah: 8)

Prophet Muhammad, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, said: **“People, beware of injustice, (oppressing others, acting unjustly or doing wrong to others.) for injustice shall be darkness on the Day of Judgment.”** (Al-Bukhari) And those who have not gotten their rights (i.e. what they have a just claim to) in this life will receive them on the Day of Judgment, as the Prophet, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, said: **‘On the Day of Judgment, rights will be given to those to whom they are due (and wrongs will be redressed)’** (Muslim)

In this sense, basic human rights in Islam include, but not limited to, the following:

1- The security of life and property - Prophet Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said, **"Your lives and properties are forbidden to one another till you meet your Lord on the day of resurrection"**. He also said about the *Dhimmis* (the non-Muslim citizens of the Muslim state), **"One who kills a man under covenant (i.e. *Dhimmi*) will not even smell the fragrance of paradise."**

2- The protection of honor, the Holy Quran says, **"O you who believe, let not some men ridicule others, for it may be that they are better than them; nor let some women ridicule others, for it may be that they are better than them. Do not speak ill of one another, nor call one another by [offensive] nicknames. How evil is the name of wickedness after having faith! And whoever does not repent, it is they who are the wrongdoers."** (Al-Hujurāt: 11)

3- Sanctity and security of private life: the Holy Quran says, **"Do not spy on one another, nor backbite one another."** (Al-Hujurāt: 12) Another ayah states, **"O you who believe, do not enter any house other than your own until you ask permission and greet their dwellers."**

That is best for you, so that you may take heed.” (An-Noor: 27)

4- The security or personal freedom: no one can be imprisoned unless his guilt is proved. In the case of suspicion, a man can be arrested but not to be jailed unless convicted, providing him the full freedom to defend himself.

5- Freedom of expression: Islam gives the freedom of thought and expression to all citizens of the Islamic state as long it goes with the limits and borders laid to protect human dignity, sanctity and respect of Allah, the almighty, His prophets and His Holy Book. Muslims are not to use this freedom to spread evil and wickedness and propagate bad thought within the Muslim society.

6- No coercion in the matter of faith: Islam has laid down the injunction, **“There is no compulsion in religion.”** (Al-Baqarah: 256) The history has witnessed numerous cases of total slavery of man over another in many parts of the world. A plain example was in Spain when Muslims and Jews were forced to change their religions by the Christians. However, history has never recorded that Muslims forced other people who lived under their rule to embrace Islam.

7- Protecting people from poverty: Islam ordains *Zakat* and encourages people to give charity to save the needy and the destitute. It insures the right of the needy people to receive assistance through *Zakat* which is one of the pillars of

Islam. Allah, Exalted be He, says **“And who give a due share of their wealth to the beggar and the dispossessed.”** (Al-Ma’arij: 24-25)

8- Equality before law: Islam confirms the right for citizens for absolute and complete equality in the eyes of the law. When some noble woman was arrested in connection of theft, many people thought she will get away with it but the Prophet, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, said, **“The nations before you were destroyed by Allah because they punished the ordinary men for their offenses and let their dignitaries go unpunished for their crimes, I swear by him who holds my life in his hand that even if Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad had committed this crime, I would have her punished.”** (Al-Bukhari)

26. Life after Death

It may not be that of all religions, Islam provides the most graphic details of what comes after death and lies beyond. Islam views death to be a natural threshold to the next stage of existence. Allah, Exalted be He, says in the Holy Quran, **“Did you think that We created you with no purpose, and that you would not be brought back to Us?”** (Al- Mu’minūn: 115)

Belief in life after death is one of the six Pillars of Faith required of a Muslim to complete his faith. These pillars are: To believe in Allah, the Almighty, His angels, His Holy Books, the messengers of Allah, the Predestination and Decree and the Hereafter. Rejecting any of them renders all other beliefs meaningless.

Islamic doctrine holds that human existence continues after the death of the human body in the form of spiritual and physical resurrection. There is a direct relation

between conduct on earth and the life beyond. The afterlife will be one of rewards and punishments which is commensurate with earthly conduct. A Day will come when Allah, the Almighty, will resurrect and gather the first and the last of His creation and judge everyone justly. People will enter their final abode, Hell or Paradise. Faith in life after death urges us to do right and to stay away from sin. In this life, we sometimes see the pious suffer and the impious enjoy. All will be judged one day and justice will be served.

All the Prophets came with a clear message to their followers: to believe in Allah, the Almighty, and the Hereafter. Having any small doubts about the reality of life after death is similar to denying Islam. When the disbelievers of Makkah, in the revival of Islam rejected the idea of life after death and thought it is impossible, the Holy Quran answers them in a very logical argument, **“Does man not see that We have created him from a sperm drop, then he becomes a clear adversary, producing arguments against Us while forgetting his own creation. He says, “Who can give life to the bones after they have crumbled to dust?” Say, “The One Who created them in the first place will give life to them, for He has full knowledge of every created being; the One Who made for you fire out of the green tree, with which you kindle your fires. Is not the One Who**

created the heavens and earth able to create the like of these [people]? Yes indeed, for He is the Creator of all, the All-Knowing.” (Yā-Sīn: 78- 81)

The day of resurrection will come and every person will stand before Allah, Exalted be He, Who will reward all those who worshipped Him faithfully and lived their lives according to his law and suffered for the sake of him. Everybody will be rewarded according to his records of deeds. The believers will enjoy the rewards of paradise and the garden of Aden where they will have no suffering after that. Moreover, there will be no death, but an eternal life. On the other hand, the disbelievers and tyrants, whose crimes went beyond the limits, will get their due punishment in the eternal Hellfire and be tortured according to their sins.

The dead have a continued and conscious existence of a kind in the grave. Muslims believe that, upon dying, a person enters an intermediate phase of life between death and resurrection. Many events take place in this new "world", such as the "trial" of the grave, where everyone will be questioned by angels about their religion, prophet, and Lord. The grave is a garden of paradise or a pit of hell; angels of mercy visit the souls of believers and angels of punishment come for the unbelievers.

Resurrection will be preceded by the end of the world. Allah, the Almighty, will command a magnificent

angel to blow the Horn. At its first blowing, all the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth will fall unconscious, except those spared by Allah. The earth will be flattened, the mountains turned into dust, the sky will crack, planets will be dispersed, and the graves overturned. People will be resurrected into their original physical bodies from their graves, thereby entering the third and final phase of life.

Allah, Exalted be He, will gather all humans, believers and disbelievers, jinn, demons, and even wild animals. It will be a universal gathering. The angels will drive all human beings naked, uncircumcised, and bare-footed to the Great Plain of Gathering. People will stand in wait for judgment and humanity will sweat in agony. The righteous will be sheltered under the shade of Allah's Magnificent Throne. When the condition becomes unbearable, people will request the prophets and the messengers to intercede with Allah, Exalted be He, on their behalf to save them from distress.

The balances will be set and the deeds of men will be weighed. Disclosure of the Records of the deeds performed in this life will follow. The one who will receive his record in his right hand will have an easy reckoning. He will happily return to his family. However, the person who will receive his record in his left hand would wish he were dead as he

will be cast into the Fire. He will be full of regrets and will wish that he were not handed his Record or he had not known it.

Then Allah will judge His creation. They will be reminded and informed of their good deeds and sins. The faithful will acknowledge their failings and be forgiven. The disbelievers will have no good deeds to declare because an unbeliever is rewarded for them in this life. Some scholars are of the opinion that the punishment of an unbeliever may be reduced in lieu of his good deeds, except the punishment of the great sin of disbelief.

The *Siraat* is a bridge that will be established over Hell extending to Paradise. Anyone who is steadfast on Allah's religion in this life will find it easy to pass it. Paradise and Hell will be the final dwelling places for the faithful and the damned after the Last Judgment. They are real and eternal. The bliss of the people of Paradise shall never end and the punishment of unbelievers condemned to Hell shall never cease. Unlike a pass-fail system in some other belief-systems, the Islamic view is more sophisticated and conveys a higher level of divine justice. This can be seen in two ways. First, some believers may suffer in Hell for unrepented, cardinal sins. Second, both Paradise and Hell have levels.

Paradise is the eternal garden of physical pleasures and spiritual delights. Suffering will be absent and bodily desires will be satisfied. All wishes will be met: palaces, servants, riches, streams of wine, milk and honey, pleasant fragrances, soothing voices and pure partners for intimacy; a person will never get bored or have enough! The greatest bliss, though, will be the vision of their Lord of which the unbelievers will be deprived.

Hell is an infernal place of punishment for unbelievers and purification for sinful believers. There will be torture and punishment for the body and the soul, burning by fire, boiling water to drink, scalding food to eat, chains, and choking columns of fire. Unbelievers will be eternally damned to it, whereas sinful believers will eventually be taken out of Hell and enter Paradise.

Paradise is for those who worshipped Allah alone, believed and followed their prophets, and lived moral lives according to the teachings of the prophets. Hell will be the final dwelling place of those who denied Allah, worshipped other beings besides Allah, rejected the call of the prophets, and led sinful, unrepentant lives.

27. *Da'wah* 'Propagation of Islamic Faith'

Da'wah is an Arabic word which takes its root from *da'a* (to call). In Islamic terminology, *da'wah* immediately implies invitation to the way of Allah and the one who practices *da'wah* is referred to as *da'iah*. So, whenever the word *da'wah* is mentioned, we are generally talking about enjoining the good and forbidding the evil to Muslims as well as to non-Muslims. The propagation of Islam was the mission of all the prophets and messengers of Allah. All of them preached the same message: **"Worship Allah; you have no god other than Him. I fear for you the**

punishment of a momentous Day.” (Al-A’raf: 59) They all called to their people saying: 'I do not seek any reward from you for this work.' Allah, the Almighty, says: **“Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and reason with them in the best manner. Your Lord knows best who has strayed from His way and knows best those who are rightly guided.”** (An-Nahl: 125)

Allah, Exalted be He, ordered His Messenger saying: **“Say [O Prophet], “This is my way. I call to Allah with clear evidence - I and those who follow me. Glory be to Allah, and I am not one of those who associate partners with Him.”** (Yusuf: 108) Having ordered his servants to employ useful knowledge and good deeds, Allah confirms: **“Who is better in speech than one who calls to Allah, does righteous deeds, and says, “I am one of the Muslims [submitting to Allah]?”** (Fussilat: 33) There are some premises to the Islamic *Da’wah*, it has five approaches, and its results are also five.

Some Premises of *Da’wah* to be observed:

First: to observe sincerity and truthfulness with Allah, and to seek His favor. Allah says: **“And they were commanded**

not, but that they should worship Allah, and worship none but Him Alone (abstaining from ascribing partners to Him), and perform *As-Salat* (*Iqamat-as-Salat*) and give *Zakat*: and that is the right religion.”

(Al-Baiyyinah: 5) The Prophet, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, foretold that the first with whom the fire of hell will be lit are three; among them is a scholar who acquired knowledge so that people would say he is learned. And it was indeed said of him.

Second: to practice what one preaches. Actually it is a scandal and disgrace that a person's actions contradict his words. Allah derides such people in the Holy Quran saying: **“Do you enjoin righteousness upon people while you forget yourselves, even though you recite the Scripture? Do you not understand?”** (Al-Baqarah: 44)

Third: to observe gentleness in presenting the message. Allah, the Almighty, advised Moses and Aaron to adopt this measure with Pharaoh, the greatest tyrant of his time: **“But speak to him gently, so that he may take heed or fear Allah.”** (Tā-ha: 44) And to Muhammad, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, He also cautioned: **“It is by Allah’s mercy that you [O Prophet] became lenient to them. If you had been harsh and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from you. So pardon them, seek**

forgiveness for them, and consult them in the important matters.” (Al-Imran:159).

The Five Means of Propagation:

First: The individual method; that is, to invite the person individually if the matter pertains to him specifically.

Second: Public or mass propagation such as in lectures or exhortations that benefit the generality of people.

Third: Private lessons to students each in his specialty. This is the task of the scholars who specialize in their disciplines.

Forth: Propagation through writing, correspondence and authorship with guidance and benefit for those who are called.

Fifth: Propagation using modern means of communication to advance the cause of truth.

The Five Results of Propagation:

First: To attain the position of the inheritors of the prophets, for they were the first callers and beacons of light in the field of propagation.

Second: To obtain prayers for your forgiveness from the creation for having taught the people goodness. Even the whale in the ocean will pray for the caller to truth.

Third: To gain great rewards equivalent to that of those invited. The Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said: **"Whoever calls to a good tradition will have the reward as the one who followed it without reducing from their reward."** (Muslim)

Fourth: The development of the caller from being on who is called to one who calls. He influences others and is not influenced by others who call to evil.

Fifth: The caller will become a leader among his people as they will follow him. Allah, the Almighty, describes the righteous and notes that they call upon Him saying: **"and those who say, "Our Lord, let our spouses and children be a source of joy for us, and make us good examples for the righteous."** (Al- Furqān: 74)

Some biased people used to repeat fallacies about Islam such as the delusion that Islam was spread by sword. Allah, Exalted be He, says: **"There is no compulsion in religion; the truth has been made distinct from falsehood. Whoever rejects Tāghoot [false gods] and believes in Allah, has indeed grasped the strong handhold that never breaks. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing."** (Al-Baqarah: 256) On the contrary, Non-Muslims must be given the full right to accept or reject Islam upon their free will. Over hundreds of years, Muslims have controlled Spain, Portugal, Greece and most of Eastern Europe and did not force people to embrace Islam. In Spain

and Portugal the Muslim rule lasted for 800 years. Muslims did not force the Spanish or Portuguese people to be Muslims. History has clearly documented these facts. However, the Christians in Spain forced Muslims and Jews to change their religions. They were given three choices: to convert to Catholicism, be killed, or cross the sea into Africa. Moreover, the Spanish colonized the Philippines for nearly 333 years; the majority of its population were Muslims. Thousands of them were killed by the Spanish invaders; others were forced to convert to Christianity. Now, only 5% of the population are Muslims. Unlike to what happened to Muslims in Yugoslavia by Christian Serbs and Croats, many non-Muslim minorities in the Middle-East, mostly Christian communities, have continued to enjoy the protection of Muslims throughout the centuries. They have never been forced to leave their religion.